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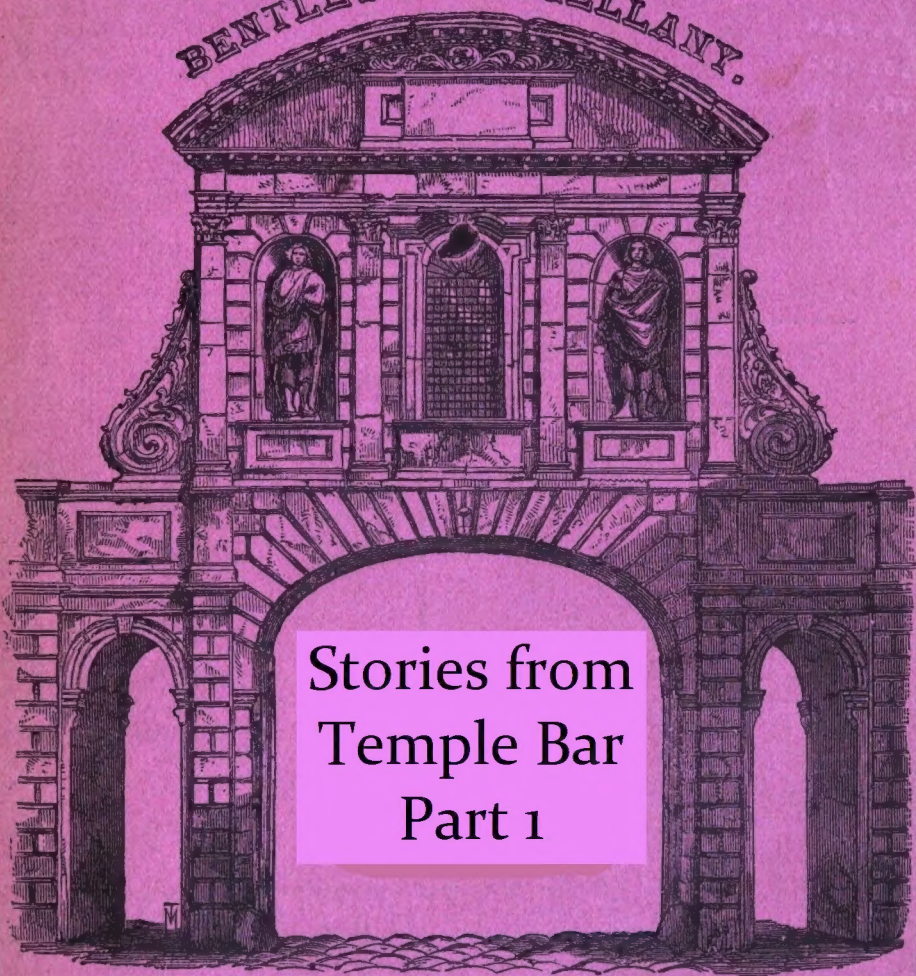
VOL. 86.

NO. 342.

TEMPLE BAR

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED

BENTLEY'S MISCELLANY.



Stories from Temple Bar Part 1

LONDON.

RICHARD BENTLEY & SON, NEW BURLINGTON ST., W.

PUBLISHERS IN ORDINARY TO HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN.

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Stories from Temple Bar, Part 1 (1861-1868)

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A Haunted Life.

It is a relief inexpressible that the man is dead. As I looked upon his face and saw the fierce, terrified expression which even in the repose of death still lingered about the half-closed eyes and rigid blue lips, and though in that presence I could have no hope that his spirit had found rest, I gave thanks that his life on earth was ended. What was there in this man more than in others that the punishment of his crime should be so much heavier than that of other sinners, that it should be taken out of the hand of man, and inflicted by whom, or what, I cannot tell?

It is three years since I first made the acquaintance of John Temple. We met in travelling. I was a stranger in a strange land, and his perfect knowledge of the route made me gratefully accept his offer of assistance and companionship. He was many years older than I, possessed of a great deal of general information, and able to converse pleasingly and intelligently upon any topic that presented itself during our journey. While willing to speak on any subject of general interest, he was extremely reserved about himself; and though before long I had told him most of my personal and family history, he made no return of confidence. From his conversation I gathered that he had either lived abroad or travelled very extensively; and this was literally all that I learned of him besides his name. We parted in London, after travelling together for nearly a week; and when I gave him my address and urged his visiting me, he accepted the invitation, but did not return the compliment. It was during his first visit that I witnessed for the first time the inexplicable phenomena of one of his attacks of illness.

I was then, as now, a bachelor, and had lodgings in the Albany, and, the evening proving violently stormy, I had little difficulty in persuading Temple to remain at my rooms all night. I offered him my bed, but he preferred the couch by the fire, saying he would throw himself down upon it when weary, without the trouble of undressing. This arrangement made, I locked the outer door (my rooms opened one within the other), and, lighting fresh cigars, we seemed to take a new lease of the evening.

The tempest still howled outside; and, as a gust fiercer than any before shook the window-frame, I turned to congratulate my friend on being under shelter, instead of being exposed to the storm on his way home. When I had last observed him he was lazily reclining on the couch in a posture between sitting and lying; now as I looked he sprang suddenly to his feet and stood gazing intently at the opposite wall, while there gathered in his face a fierce expression of terror such as I had never before seen. Instinctively I rose and looked at the wall, but saw nothing in its blank expanse to account for Temple's intensity of gaze. Next moment he advanced two or three steps across the room, and threw him-

self into an attitude of defence, as though warding off a blow. With his left arm raised to the level of his eyes, he appeared to strike something with the clenched fist of his right hand. I say, to "strike something;" for though I could see nothing in the space before him, the blow was certainly not given in the air, but stopped short with tremendous force, as though met by some opposing object.

I was too much appalled to speak, and stood blindly staring at my friend, who began to breathe heavily. I could have imagined from the way in which he reeled backward that from time to time he received violent blows, and still the fight continued; for that it was a fight, a deadly struggle, I soon became convinced, though I could only see one of the combatants. Before long it was very plain that Temple had the worst of it: his blows were feebler, his breathing more oppressed, and his face became livid as death. Wrought up to the intensest pitch of excitement and agitation, I felt spell-bound; unable to move, though I believed my friend was dying. A moment, and he went down as I have seen a man go down before a heavy blow on the head; and as he fell he broke the silence, hitherto undisturbed except by his laboured breathing, by a yell of what seemed to me mortal terror rather than pain.

I sprang to him, and, finding him insensible, dragged him upon the couch, and tried to revive him. But the swoon was an obstinate one; and a sudden fear that he was dead sent me out into the stormy night for medical help. Physicians abound in that neighbourhood, and I was fortunate in speedily obtaining one with whom I was slightly acquainted.

Merely telling him that a friend who was spending the night at my rooms had been attacked by fainting, and that, my efforts to recover him having proved unavailing, I had sought his assistance, I hurried with him to my lodgings.

Temple lay on the couch as I had left him, pale and insensible. Dr. Simpson felt his pulse, and I thought looked puzzled. "Bring a pillow, Mr. Johnson," he said, "and raise his head."

I did as he requested. I could have sworn that the man was dead; and I will confess that my pulse quickened as the thought of an inquest crossed my mind, and how impossible it would be for me to explain the extraordinary scene that I had witnessed: I was roused from my thoughts by the physician's voice, sharp and quick:

"This is not mere fainting. He has had a blow upon the head. You should have told me of this at once: the wound may be dangerous."

The wound! And I saw upon the pillow dark crimson stains of blood. I was petrified; for I was certain that in his fall his head had not struck against any thing likely to produce such a wound as the one I now saw. It was nearly two inches in length, and of a rough, jagged appearance.

Dr. Simpson went on sharply, as he busied himself with preparations

for dressing the wound, "How long has he been in this state, and what has done this?"

I answered desperately, "Upon my soul I do not know. He seemed to me, when this fainting attacked him, to fall on the floor without striking against any thing."

"Impossible! Did he strike the fender? I tell you, Mr. Johnson, that this is not fainting at all, but a dangerous state of insensibility brought on by this blow on the head."

I stood by the fire, lost in confusing thought. I was sure that this wound was caused by the blow which had prostrated him at the close of that ghastly fight; but I had not seen the blow given, though I had seen it received; and I felt that to mention it would only make me appear like a madman, and complicate an affair already sufficiently puzzling, especially as Dr. Simpson seemed satisfied that the wound had been produced by striking against the sharp iron-work of the fender in his fall. I was roused again by the sharp voice:

"There, Mr. Johnson, that will do. I never saw such a wound from such a cause. Now I'll give him five minutes, and if my remedies produce no effect in that time, then I must bleed him,"—and he took his lancets from his pocket, selected one, and laid it on the table;—"You say he fainted and fell?"

"Yes," I answered doggedly. I was in no mood for conversation about it.

He seemed to observe my unwillingness to speak, and, turning towards the couch, said, as though speaking to himself,

"I should rather anticipate an attack of brain-fever after this; in which case, Mr. Johnson," and he raised his voice, "he must stay here: you must not think of moving him."

It was an intense relief to me when, before the expiration of the given time, Temple moaned and moved slightly. "Thank God!" I said; and I thanked Him more heartily still when in a short time he opened his eyes and uttered my name in a weak voice.

In the course of another hour we had laid him in my bed, and Dr. Simpson had left us, promising another call about noon of the day which had already dawned. There were no symptoms of fever about the patient; he was exceedingly exhausted. I sat by his bed-side till about seven o'clock; and then, leaving him comfortably sleeping, I threw myself into a large chair in the adjoining room. I meant to think the whole thing calmly over; but I was fatigued, and sleep overcame me.

He was at my rooms for nearly a week. The wound healed rapidly, and his strength returned much sooner than I had expected. On the sixth day after his strange attack, he told me to get him a cab, and he would go home. I made no attempt to prevent it; for in truth I was glad for him to go. My nerves had received a shock that terrible night, and while constantly in his presence I felt that they could not recover their tone. He left me about three o'clock in the afternoon, giving me

his address, and requesting, rather than inviting, me to come to see him the following day. I would willingly have declined doing so, but he would take no denial, and I was obliged to promise that I would come.

I could not tell why, but I certainly dreaded my visit, and would gladly have accepted the slightest pretext for breaking the engagement, had one presented itself. About sunset I left my lodgings to walk to Brompton, where Temple lived. It was a bleak February day, and the quick walk in the keen wind did much towards restoring me to myself; so that by the time I knocked at Temple's door I had quite lost the vague feeling of uneasiness which during the day had disturbed me whenever I had thought of the evening.

I was shown into a large, bright, cheerful apartment, whose furniture and arrangements showed plainly wealth and taste combined in luxury and elegance.

Though Temple looked ill, I avoided making any inquiries about his health; and as we sat opposite to each other for some time in silence, my uneasy feelings returned in full force.

The hours passed slowly, Temple seeming lost in reverie. At length, rousing himself with evident effort,

"I am a dull dog to-night," he said. "Open that cabinet if you care for stones and shells."

"But I don't," I answered somewhat rudely.

He smiled.

"That's candid: look at the books; or stay,"—and he took from a large portfolio that stood against the wall a number of photographs, chiefly architectural, and perfectly beautiful of their kind.

In my own rooms, and at my leisure, I should have enjoyed few things more than the turning over of such a collection; but now I felt disinclined for it. My listlessness betrayed itself in my manner of examination, and I was glad when Temple perceived it, and gathering them up replaced them in their case.

I took up a book that lay on the table near me, and had scarcely opened it when Temple held out his hand for it. I gave it to him, and rapidly turning over the leaves, he read two lines with fierce bitter emphasis:

"There may be heaven, there must be hell,
Meanwhile there is our life here; well!"

He threw the book upon the table, and began to pace up and down the room, speaking slowly, "That man understood the whole thing when he wrote those lines; the possibility of heaven for some, the certainty of hell for many; and meanwhile, pending something worse or better, the endurance of this life for us all. I know nothing finer than those two lines; I should like them to be put upon my grave-stone."

"In Heaven's name, why?" I asked, startled more by his manner than his words.

"A queer kind of epitaph, I suppose you think," he continued smil-

ing ; "but I shall not die like a Christian, and so have no right to expect Christian burial, with the decency of a grave-stone, and the ornament of an epitaph."

He sat down again opposite to me, and my vague feeling of fear grew stronger every moment as I looked at him. I felt an irresistible impulse to question him.

"Why not?" I said.

He leaned forward towards me till I could feel his breath in my face, and said in a low clear tone,

"Because my life is haunted, and my death will be damned."

The words were terrible enough ; but they derived additional horror from the manner of their utterance. He did not speak them recklessly, but with the calmest, deepest, most mournful appreciation of their awful signification ; as though he had thought the matter over dispassionately, and decided once and for ever that there was no remedy, no escape, no hope.

Temple threw himself back in his chair for a moment, and then rising began again slowly to pace the floor. He spoke at length :

"I will tell you a story, Johnson, the strangest surely that ever passed human lips. It will be almost as new to me as to you ; for though I have been living it for more than four years, I have never heard it put into words, and but for what occurred to me at your rooms a week ago I should not do so now.

"I am forty-five years old. Of the forty I shall say little, though they were important and eventful years enough ; and it is to them, and to their work, that I owe the comfort and affluence of my present position. At forty a man's life should be very much decided, and I thought mine was. Owing to certain successful speculations, my fortune had become so considerable that I had no need for any further anxiety about it. I had travelled over the greater part of the globe, and concluded that England was, after all, the best place to live in of any in the world. I believed that I was destined for a bachelor, and prided myself on being true to the tender memory of a buried love ; though I think now that the truth was, the grief of my young life had long given place to the indifference of my riper years, and the real reason of my celibacy was not the clinging memory of my early love, but that I feared if I married I should be obliged to give up the unsettled habits of many wandering years. Accordingly, I took a house in London ; furnished it after my own somewhat peculiar taste, and was preparing to enjoy the remainder of my life in uneventful ease, when intelligence reached me of something wrong in connection with a Mexican mine in which I was concerned, and in which a large share of my fortune was invested. It was with a feeling of considerable annoyance that I prepared for the journey, as I judged the matter to require personal investigation ; and from the time I reached Mexico I bade adieu to the life of other men, and from that date to the present hour have led a life that I think no demon in hell would be willing to accept in exchange for his own proper torment.

"There was nothing really wrong with the mine : a panic had seized the shareholders, but I found that it had nearly subsided by the time that I reached Mexico. There was no necessity for my remaining there above a few days, for my agent was in all respects trustworthy ; but *quem Deus vult perdere prius dementat*, and I made arrangements for spending the winter in the city. I have moralised a thousand times upon the small pivot on which man's destiny turns. If I could have gone mad, I should have done so, in trying to understand how, from such small premises, can be drawn conclusions so gigantic. I stayed in Mexico that winter ; and the result is, a ruined life here, and hell hereafter.

"It was a particularly gay season, and at one of the public entertainments, of which there were many, I met with one at sight of whom my heart throbbed with the fiery pulses of twenty years. I, a man of forty, who prided himself on his insensibility to the charms of women, fell a victim, like a boy, to the fascinations of a beautiful Spaniard, little more than half my age. But though I was fascinated like a boy, by the brilliancy of her flashing eyes and the glowing ruby of her lips, I loved her with a man's devotion ; curses on her, for a false heart and for a lying tongue ! I told my love ; in words which I had never thought to use, I vowed my life to her service. Bewildered by passion, I asked only leave to love, to bask in her presence day after day ; I did not think it possible that she should return my love. But she told me, her hot Spanish blood burning in her beautiful cheeks, my native language broken into music in her sweet speech, how, since I loved her, the skies were bluer, the earth greener, the flowers lovelier ; and I was beguiled by her false woman's tongue, and gave myself up even more fully to the infatuation. I thought I stood at the gate of heaven, and found too late that I had demanded admittance at the door of perdition ; I listened for the music of the spheres, and heard the roaring of infernal fires ; I thought to bathe in light, and leapt desperately into scorching flames.

"Had I been less reserved by nature, and made acquaintance with those whom I met from time to time, I might have learned the truth ; as it was, I took the lie she gave me. She said she was the daughter of a man well known in the city, though of suspicious reputation,—one Alonzo Guandano. Though I had been so short a time in Mexico, I knew his name well, as an alchemist, an astrologer, a man versed in strange and unearthly knowledge ; one to whom, by virtue of a compact with the evil one, no power was denied.

"I asked my beautiful Inez of the truth of this ; she wept, she trembled ; alas, it was all true, and she had felt his power. I pressed my love to my bosom, and swore to take her with me across the sea, to a happy home which I had already prepared. She hesitated, asked for time, and I gave it her, as I would have done my heart's blood. It was agreed that the new year should witness our flight.

"Two or three weeks passed in a kind of delirium. I saw Inez daily,

and lost no opportunity of urging our flight. She yielded at length to my persuasions, and I blessed her for it, when I should rather have cursed her. I swear to Heaven that I believed her when she said she was Guandano's daughter; and I did not discover till too late that my love was as sinful as it was passionate.

"I had made every arrangement, and the evening came which was to be followed by the morning of our flight. We met at our trysting-place for the last time, and I soothed the fluttered spirit of my timid love, and pictured to her our life that was to be in England. I told her, too, in glowing words, of what my pride would be in her as my wife; and she listened, and had not the mercy to destroy me by telling the truth at that last moment. Her exquisite face seemed to tremble in the moonshine; in the soft light her beauty assumed a character of unearthly fragility, and I clasped her closer in my arms, as though I feared she would have melted from my grasp. She uttered a faint cry, and struggled in my embrace. I loosed my hold, and saw an awful figure standing by my side. Though I had never seen Guandano, I knew at once that it was he; long flowing robes, curiously embroidered in fantastic figures and characters, enveloped a form taller and more majestic, it seemed to me, than that of mortal man.

"Bold in my integrity of purpose, I did not quail before his terrible eyes. But it was upon Inez that the terror of his glance fell. I could not intercept it; and, in a voice calm through excess of fury, he addressed her as one abandoned in character and shameless in conduct. I spoke for my love. I was not afraid to own my love boldly, regardless that his countenance gathered blackness at each word. I said that his daughter was pure as the angels in heaven. A mocking laugh answered me, and before its echoes had died away, words of doom pealed in my ears:

" 'She is my wife.'

"Did the moon fall from the heavens, and the earth spin beneath my feet, or was it that my brain reeled under the blow of his words? I cannot tell.

"I turned to Inez, not to reproach her, but to see her face once more: in its rigid whiteness I read the confession of her guilt. I spoke three words tenderly, 'God forgive her;' and as I spoke, Guandano drew his dagger swiftly from his girdle, and sheathed it in her false heart.

" 'She knew her fate,' he said: 'unfaithfulness, and death for her punishment. When I took her as my wife five years ago, I made that condition. I have kept it to-day. And there is also death for you, though not with this dagger.'

"He drew the weapon from its ghastly sheath, and breathing upon it threw it up high into the air. Instinctively I looked up after it, and saw it change into an evil-looking black bird, which flew screaming towards the north. Up to this moment I had not remembered Guandano's reputed powers: during this fearful interview I had regarded him only as the father of Inez, until I was obliged to recognise in him her husband

and her murderer, and had not once thought of him as a magician. But in this sight I recognised the evil power I had heard attributed to him; and thinking that the only chance I had for life lay in surprising and disabling him, I threw myself upon him, and tried to grasp his throat. It was as I had hoped; completely off his guard, he had no time for spells and incantations, and though he was considerably taller than I, yet my personal strength greatly exceeded his. The moment my hand was on his throat there woke in me a deadly thirst for his life: I had attacked him in the first place to preserve my own life, but now every thought vanished in a consuming desire for his death.

"It was a fearful struggle, and blow after blow was given on either side with frenzied strength. I felt myself failing, and summoning all my powers, dealt Guandano a blow which sent him reeling backwards to the earth. This would have gained me very little more than a momentary respite, but that in falling he struck his head violently against a large stone lying near, and was wounded and partially stunned. I drew from my pocket a large knife which I always carried with me on my travels, and, mad for his blood, plunged it into his breast. My intention was to stab him to the heart; but the blade snapt, and the wound, though mortal, was not instantly fatal. He opened his eyes and told me he was dying, for my knife had pierced his breast precisely where there was a mark, the sign and seal of the compact with the evil one to which I have referred.

"Half raising himself by a convulsive effort, in a voice growing fainter and weaker every moment, he cursed me in strange words, calling upon strange powers for the fulfilment of his curse. I could understand very little of what he said; the words 'haunted in his life' were all that were distinctly intelligible. Then covering his face with a portion of his flowing robes, he lay down to die.

"It was a fearful scene. Inez lay on the ground to my left, with her face, still beautiful, turned up to the quiet stars; her attitude was one of childlike repose, lying peacefully as though in sleep. To my right lay Guandano's majestic figure, covered from head to heel in the fantastically embroidered robes, whose silver and golden threads glittered in the moonlight as they moved with the strong heaving of his wounded breast.

"The moon sank and the stars paled in the light of coming day; but it was not till the sun rose blood-red that I thought of flight. Guandano's convulsive breathing had died into silence long ago: I had been alone with the beautiful dead and the awful dead for hours. Suddenly I realised what my position would be if found under these circumstances, and the thought drove me to action.

"Every arrangement had been made for my leaving Mexico that morning, and nothing remained for me to do but to take the broken pieces of my knife to prevent detection, and to sail for England. I drew a ring from the finger of Inez, which I intended to keep in memory of her, and then raised Guandano's robe to take the broken knife-blade from the wound. It was gone: I could find it nowhere, though I was certain

it had been lodged in his breast. To my unutterable horror I saw that the expression in Guandano's eye when he had cursed me, and which I had shudderingly noted at the time, was in it still: the curse came fearfully to mind, and hastily covering the face I fled. I looked back once in my flight, and saw the face uncovered; it may have been by the wind; but with a terror that the murdered man was watching me, I fled faster and still faster, not venturing to look behind me again.

"My escape was quite easy. The vessel which was in waiting to convey me and my beautiful bride to our happy home took me alone,—a murderer bearing a curse more fearful than that of Cain.

"Nor was it long before the mysterious curse took a shape, and I knew that mine was a haunted life. One day, a month after my return to England, I was standing by the fire in a room of one of the club-houses in Pall Mall. There were about a dozen men in the room beside myself; some dining, some smoking and reading, some conversing; and I watched their movements as I saw them reflected in the mirror before me. It was evening, and the room was brilliantly lighted by many lamps: the reflection in the mirror reminded me of a scene in a play. As I looked I saw suddenly, high up in the glass, the reflection of a large round lamp, which I did not remember to have seen before. I turned to look into the room for it, but seeing nothing like it, turned again to the mirror. And now to my terror I saw that it was no lamp but a moon; and the ceiling of the room was changed for a deep blue midnight sky, and the dining-tables and card-tables, and all the familiar objects of the room vanished slowly, and in their place came trees and grass, a spot I knew too well,—our tryst when Inez and I were lovers. Presently the whole scene was visible; and there was enacted before my bewildered eyes the tragedy of my last night in Mexico. The most terrible thing was the image of myself fighting desperately with Guandano, the features distorted with mad rage. I tried to turn my glance aside, but it was impossible; I was constrained to watch the ghastly fight to its tragical ending. Just as it had really been, after Guandano had received the fatal blow, he rose and cursed me; and now I heard the words distinctly. My horror was insupportable, and I fainted.

"For about three months after that time I had no return of the curse, and I began to hope the single visitation would be all; but I was mistaken. I went one evening to the theatre: I was in my seat early, before the rising of the curtain, and was looking idly round the house, when my eye was caught by a glimmer that caused me to look straight before me for the light. Upon the dark expanse of the curtain, as though reflected upon it from a magic-lantern, was the spectral moon which I had before seen in the mirror. I knew what was coming, and watched the whole scene gleam slowly out—trees, grass, and two figures, for this time Inez and I were alone, as we had been in the early part of that tragical evening. And then Guandano's majestic form—but I need not describe it: the same vision appeared on the curtain that had appalled me in the mirror,

but this time I heard the sound of blows, and of the heavy breathing of the combatants. As Guandano fell pierced by my knife, a mortal pang shot through my breast, and, as before, I fainted.

"I could never calculate time or place: the vision was presented to me in the street, in church, alone in my own room: sometimes for months I was altogether free from it, and again I saw it twice in one week. I ceased to attend all places of public resort, and gave myself up entirely to my curse; I felt that to attempt to evade it was useless, and I even came to take a morbid interest in watching the development of its phenomena. It was never exactly as I had seen it before: sometimes there was an awful silence, save when the words of the curse were spoken; and at others I heard every sound, from my first love-whisper to the trembling Inez, to the sound of my escaping footsteps as I ran from the murdered man.

"I grew curious to know what would be the next change, but was quite unprepared for what occurred about two years after my return to England.

"On the second anniversary of that fatal day I not only saw the scene more vividly than ever, like a picture on the wall of my study, but I actually *felt* the blows which I saw given to my wraith in the vision. You think me mad, but I tell you there were bruises on my body proving beyond all question that I had been severely beaten.

"You will now understand what seemed inexplicable in my attack at your rooms the other evening, though that time was the first that I have been wounded as well as beaten."

He turned back the sleeve on his left arm and held the limb before me; from the elbow to the wrist it was covered with many-coloured bruises. I glanced up into his face as he stood before me; it had altered considerably since he began to tell me his story, and now wore the look of a man prematurely aged; the features seemed moulded into wrinkles by the inexorable fingers of despair.

I rose and walked across the room, to shake off the clinging horror that oppressed me.

He spoke again in a dreary tone,

"And now, Johnson, you must make me a promise, and bind yourself by an oath to keep it."

I was startled, and must have shown that I was so, for Temple added:

"You need be under no apprehension; all I want is, that you shall promise to come to me whenever I send for you; and above all, that wherever you may be, you will come to me when I am dying, which time I cannot think far distant."

"Have you no older friend?" I asked.

He disregarded my question entirely, and continued,

"You need have no personal fear. It will be some comfort to me; and if it is terrible for you to witness, what must I suffer?"

I was ashamed of my cowardice, and gave the promise he asked, confirming it by a solemn oath which he dictated. He seemed satisfied; and, lighting another cigar, he handed the box to me and sat down again.

I was singularly ill at ease, and bitterly regretted,—now that regret was unavailing,—my oath and promise. Temple spoke presently, returning as by fascination to the evil subject :

"And I lead a cursed life between the visions. I should have ended it long ago, but I dared not let my soul out into the dark to meet Guandano. The meeting is but delayed, and though I know that, I am not brave enough to bring it one moment nearer by my own act. Look there—" and he pointed to a clear ray of moonlight which came through the window and lay white upon the carpet; "I can never see that without feeling how lost and hopeless my life is."

"For God's sake, Temple," I broke in, "stop! I am nearly bewildered by the horrors I have heard to-night, and will not hear another word. I must keep my word, having pledged it; but I wish to Heaven we had never met!"

I regretted my passionate words a moment after, as I looked into his mournful face; but terror had made me cruel. I took my hat, and was about to leave the room.

"I will walk with you," said Temple, rising.

"You shall not," I answered hotly. "I am nearly as mad as yourself to have listened to your cursed story."

He did not seem displeased, but said quietly,

"Good night, then. Remember your promise."

I walked home like one in a dream. Call it cowardice, if you will; but my very flesh seemed to creep on my bones as I remembered what I had heard, and recalled the promise I had made. If I could have thought Temple a madman, it would have relieved me; but his manner, so free from excitement, so full of quiet resignation, forbade my doing so: and yet the thing was monstrous. As I walked along Piccadilly,—saw its familiar objects and its nineteenth-century life,—I thought of wild stories that I had read in childhood of magicians and demons, and decided that such things were fictions. But again I recalled the scene in my rooms, and was staggered.

I began to hate Temple. Though sensible that I was doing him the bitterest injustice, and that he deserved only pity from me, I was still unable to repress the feeling which before long had grown to such a height that I felt it impossible to remain in the same country with him, and determined to leave England for a time. I had been for some years reading for the bar, and was expecting an immediate call to it. My legal knowledge therefore warranted my accepting an engagement which was offered me by an acquaintance who was prevented by illness from visiting personally some property which had become embarrassed, owing to the neglect or dishonesty of his agents. I was so eager to leave England, that it was not until I had fully determined upon the journey that I remembered I had not inquired where the business lay. With a strong feeling of shame at my unbusiness-like arrangements, I made the inquiry; but every feeling was lost in that of extreme astonishment when my friend

said it was a Mexican mine. My first impulse was to throw up the engagement at once, Mexico being inseparably associated in my mind with Temple and his hideous story,—and it was from these that I sought escape; but upon second thought it struck me that thus I might find out for myself the truth of the tragedy in which Temple had played so fatal a part. If such a man as Guandano had lived in Mexico and come to an untimely death so short a time as four years before, the memory of his death would not have died out, and I should have Temple's story corroborated or contradicted.

During the interval that necessarily elapsed between the concluding of the engagement and my departure from England, as far as possible I avoided Temple, and scrupulously abstained from any reference to my approaching journey. It was with a feeling of relief, to which I had been a stranger ever since I became Temple's unwilling confidant, that I set sail early in July. The voyage was a propitious one, and I reached my destination early in August. Having once entertained the idea of investigating the truth of what Temple had told me, I came to consider that as my real errand, and began my inquiries the very day after I landed. I found no difficulty; no sooner had I asked of Guandano's fate,—saying I had heard of him as a man versed in strange lore, from an Englishman who had visited Mexico some years before,—than the whole story was told to me: how the bodies of Guandano and his wife had been found in the grove adjoining to his house,—hers stabbed to the heart, and his without sign of any cause of death. The bodies had been buried; but the following day the grave was found to be open, and Guandano's corpse missing. This circumstance had so impressed the inhabitants of the city that nothing had been done to his house, which remained in every respect as it had been left by the magician.

I asked if it were possible to enter it; and was told by my host that nothing could be easier, as it was open; and, though many visited it daily, no one had dared to remove or displace any thing contained in the building. He added, that there was one very singular thing connected with it,—that though every other room was dimmed by the dust, which had been so long accumulating, the one which from its curious furniture and arrangements was conjectured to have been Guandano's private apartment, had the appearance of being always kept in order as though still occupied, no trace of dust or disorder ever being visible in it. Popular superstition had long ago declared that this room had been the scene of unholy rites, and that the spirit of the magician had not found rest, but nightly visited his old haunts and kept the room free from change of any kind.

Business was imperative, and for three days after my arrival I found no opportunity of putting into execution my intention of visiting the deserted house. On the fourth day, taking my host as guide, I went early in the forenoon to see for myself what truth there was in the story I had heard. After walking for a couple of miles, we wound through a small

plantation, and came suddenly upon a building of no extraordinary appearance; it was very much like other large houses in and near the city, but was much dilapidated—more, it seemed to me, than four or five years of neglect would account for. My companion pointed out to me the spot where the bodies had been found, marked beyond all question; for upon the green grass were two seared and withered places, bearing sufficient resemblance to the human form to show very plainly where they had lain.

We entered the house, and passed at once into the weird chamber. I observed it curiously; the walls were painted; on a black ground, and as though leaping out upon us, were large yellow dragons, fiery tongued. One side was covered with shelves containing books, and bottles of what I supposed to be chemicals. Every thing was in perfect order; but the whole had a cold, cruel look; there was no beautiful thing in all that large room, save one picture,—the painted head of a most lovely woman. I had no need to question my host; he told me at once that it was a portrait of Guandano's wife. I was fascinated by the power of its beauty; my pulse beat quickly, throbbing to my brain, as I looked into the luminous depths of those unfathomable eyes, false lights that had lured my unhappy friend to destruction. But as I gazed, the character of the face seemed to change; a mournful, pleading look seemed bent upon me from the solemn eyes; a tender, wistful expression stole round the curved corners of the exquisite lips. My heart beat like a drum in my ears, as I thought I heard a sweet, low voice speaking in extenuation of the cruel deception.

"I was so weary; life here with Guandano was so dreary to my wasting youth, it was killing me; and I loved Temple truly, though I was false in what I said."

With a desperate effort I tore myself from the picture, and we left the room.

"I should like to have that head," I said at length to my host.

"Holy Virgin!" he replied, in a terrified tone, and crossing himself devoutly; "you must be mad to dream of such a thing."

Ascending a flight of stairs, we entered a room dimmed and tarnished with dust, and showing signs of disorder, as though it had been hastily left by its occupant; there were a thousand evidences that this had been a woman's room. On a table in the centre stood a large frame, containing a piece of embroidery, while by its side lay faded silks, and threads of tarnished silver and yellow gold. I associated it instantly with the curiously embroidered robes worn by Guandano on the fatal night, and looked carefully into it. It was a thin fabric, of a most brilliant blue, and in the finished portion were gorgeous leaves and flowers; and tiny humming-birds, bright as life, peeped out from among the leaves, or seemed, in the delicate perfection of their creation, to fly across the surface of the cloth. A vase of crystal, cased in golden filigree, stood upon a small table; from the little heap of dust upon its foot, I conjectured

that it had held flowers. Stringed instruments of unusual form lay on one side, and thrown carelessly upon a kind of divan was something which I imagined to be a black lace mantilla; knowing the story as I did, there was something unutterably pathetic in these tokens, and declaring myself satisfied, I proposed our return to the city, being fully determined to visit the house again, alone, at my earliest opportunity.

The business which I had undertaken was of a most complicated nature, and would, I soon discovered, keep me in Mexico for at least a year; I was satisfied that it should be so, and leaving the hotel, established myself in a lodging just outside the city.

Though much occupied by business, it was rarely that a week passed without my finding time to visit Guandano's house, though, after the first few visits, I resolutely avoided more than a passing glance at the painted head in the magician's room. So surely as I gazed earnestly upon it, the pleading look stole over the face, and a sweet madness took possession of my brain, such as no living woman had ever caused me. I forgot then that I looked upon a picture, and longed to press my lips to hers, to kiss away the tender wistful expression that I could have wept to see. Is it possible that the power of the master of the chamber lingered in it still, and that I came under its influence at such times?

The year had more than expired, and still I was unable to finish my business and to return to England. I had made acquaintance with several young men of the city, and through them had been introduced to their families, so that I was by no means lonely, and was not displeased at the prospect of a longer stay in the pleasant city.

One night in the winter, some half-dozen of us were returning from a ball, somewhat exhilarated by the scene we had just quitted, and possibly excited by the wine which we had drunk, when one of our party proposed that we should pay a visit to the magician's house. The proposition was instantly agreed to by all but myself; and though I objected, I was weak enough to be over-persuaded, and we entered the grove leading to the house. It was a brilliant moonlight night, and the scene was almost as visible as at mid-day. I remembered Temple's story, and felt as one in a dream. I was roused by the voice of one of my companions:

"Come on; let us see who will first dare to kiss the portrait in Guandano's room."

All laughed but myself; I was terrified.

"Do nothing of the kind," I said; "let us go back."

"Go back!" was echoed scornfully; "Johnson, you are a coward. The old knave took such jealous care of his wife while she was living that one never could touch her hand even; and now, by all the demons, I will kiss her lips."

"Bravo! bravo!" applauded his companions, and we continued our walk; I was filled with a nameless horror, and yet was so fascinated that I could not leave the reckless group.

They burst open the door, and dashed noisily into the weird cham-

ber ; but not even the boldest of them dared advance another step, for a strange sight met their eyes.

The room was filled with light, which yet did not seem to come from the moon ; for its pale rays streaming in through the windows were lost in the blaze. No lamp was visible ; but the fireplace was filled with flames burning silently though intensely upwards. Standing near, and examining by its light the contents of a small phial, was a majestic figure, which I knew in a moment to be Guandano. Sitting, or rather reclining in a low chair on the opposite side of the fireplace, was the figure of Inez, radiant in unearthly beauty. I glanced instinctively at the portrait on the wall. Merciful Heaven ! the frame was empty ! For one mad moment I saw the yellow dragons, fiery-tongued, racing on the painted wall, and I fainted.

My friends took me home, I suppose, for I found myself next morning in my own room ; I tried to think the whole thing a ghastly dream, and had almost succeeded in doing so when one of my companions of the preceding evening called upon me. The moment our eyes met, I was sure it was no dream, and spoke accordingly.

"What happened last night after I fainted ?"

"Oh, the devil ! Johnson, ask nothing about it : I think hell was let loose last night ; I shall never go there again."

"Nor I," I said ; "I shall leave for England as soon as possible."

I was determined upon this, and wound up my affairs speedily ; I wrote to my friend that, though the business was not entirely settled, circumstances had occurred which obliged me to leave Mexico at once, and that I should see him very soon after he had received my letter, when I might be able to explain more fully what had transpired.

I lost no time in making arrangements for my return, and three weeks after that terrible night I was on my way to England.

It was a dreary voyage home, and yet I was in no haste to reach England. I tried to reason myself out of my fears ; I thought over and over again how unlikely the whole story of Temple's haunted life was, and resolved that it was impossible that he should receive actual blows from what he himself called a vision. But no sooner had I done this than I remembered his attack in my rooms ; he had been struck then beyond all question ; and when I recalled the midnight scene in Guandano's room, reason was of no avail, and I returned to implicit and most miserable belief in all that he had told me. So I was obliged to content myself by cursing the day on which I met him, and the still more evil day when I had listened to his story : meanwhile time passed, and in due course I found myself in London.

Much as I was disinclined for it, I felt it was my duty to call upon Temple at the earliest opportunity ; and accordingly one day, about a month after my return, I walked over to Brompton.

The door was opened in answer to my knock by Temple himself, who said,

"I felt sure it was you, Johnson; I have been expecting you."

"How so?" I asked.

"I cannot tell; for I was not certain that you were in England; but all day I have been expecting to see you."

We were in his study by this time; I looked at him carefully by the full gaslight, and was shocked to see the change in him; his hair was quite gray, and his features sunken and fixed in a stony expression; I asked if he had been ill, and he answered, "No."

It was a strange meeting between two men calling themselves friends, who had not met for nearly two years. I was unwilling to make any reference to my Mexican visit; but I wondered that Temple should seem to have the same feeling.

We spoke of things we felt little interest in—of politics, of the weather, and I felt that each moment was bringing us nearer to what I least wished to speak of. Presently came an interval of silence, and during its long moments I made a resolution that, cost what it might, I would no longer avoid Temple or any subject of conversation which he might choose to introduce; and I determined, too, that henceforth, if my society was of any consolation, he should have it at any time he might wish, and I would keep my promise faithfully and readily. I was brought to this resolution by a careful study of his face, with its sad, patient, careworn expression; it had what I can only describe as a *lonely* look, and my very soul was filled with compassion. I realised clearly the bitter injustice of his fate, the punishment so much too heavy for the transgression; and this thought threw me at once back to the supernatural character and power of his victim and tormentor.

I rose and held out my hand to him; he gave his as though instinctively, and with a look of some surprise.

"Temple," I said, "I now renew the promise I made in this room two years ago. I made it then reluctantly, and though I intended to keep it, I should have done so in a very half-hearted fashion; now I make it willingly;" and I repeated the solemn words of the oath.

We shook hands in silence; the compact was fully made. I sat down again, and continued, still urged to speech by the expression of Temple's face:

"I confess that I left England to escape you: your confidence oppressed me till life here seemed unbearable. If I did not think you were a madman, at least I regarded you as a monomaniac; but now I am sure that every word you spoke to me was terrible truth; and if you can find help or strength in my friendship, I bid you use it unsparingly; for I give it to you freely."

There was evidence of intense and painful emotion in Temple's countenance—emotion which for a time prevented his speaking. He found words at length.

"Thank God, Johnson, and thank you. Since you have given me your sympathy and friendship, I no longer utterly despair: I shall not

go out of the world wholly desolate ; and who knows if this may not be given to me as an emblem of the rest and comfort which I may find in another ?”

“ God grant it !” I said solemnly ; and the words were a prayer.

I no longer dreaded to speak of my Mexican visit, and told him all that I could remember of Guandano's house. When I began to tell of the picture and its fascination, he stopped me abruptly.

“ Not that, Johnson. I know that tender pleading look so well.” He pressed his hands against his eyes, as though striving to shut out some agonising sight. “ My curse grows heavier, Johnson ; and I sometimes think it is because, spite of all my knowledge of her unworthiness and my suffering, I love her still. ‘ Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.’ Perhaps Guandano is jealous still,” he added with a bitter laugh : “ the dead man jealous of his dead wife !”

I went on to tell him of the midnight scene, and it affected him in a way I was not prepared for.

“ Poor love !” he said, “ does he bring her there for one sad hour ?— Then indeed I am avenged.” He seemed moved with pity.

I felt this to be wrong, and said so. “ Do you forget ?” I asked.

“ Oh, I forget nothing. But I see you are uneasy at the turn our conversation has taken ; we will change it. I do not wish to make unnecessary demands upon your goodness. I promise in my turn not to distress you needlessly.”

He kept his word ; sending for me rarely, but always, I found, after one of his strange attacks, which now were not only more violent, but more frequent.

The year passed ; and I agreed to spend the night of the 31st of December with Temple ; we were to watch the new year in together.

I found my friend looking very weak and ill.

“ I have had a terrible attack this week, Johnson,” he said ; “ and I am afraid of another to-night. I feel certain that this coming year will be my last ; indeed, I do not think I shall live to see many days of it.”

“ Pooh, Temple, you are nervous,” I said, as I tried to rally him upon his low spirits. But I failed to do so ; and in his solemn presence my own spirits lost their lightness, and I was not able to do or say any cheerful thing. I wished the night over as the hours dragged slowly on, and listened anxiously for the tolling of twelve o'clock, which should announce the death of the old year, and which I had determined should be the signal for my departure.

The deep-toned church clock boomed twelve through the quiet air, interrupted by the quick silvery sound of the small chimney time-piece, which, beginning to strike at three of the large clock, had rapidly beaten out its twelve strokes, and become silent long before the last echoes of the deep tone had died away. I rose with alacrity.

“ A happy new year to you, Temple ; and good night.”

He rose, as I thought, to return my greeting, and to accompany me to the door; but I looked into his face, and saw—— How shall I describe it? It was the same scene that I had witnessed in my own rooms, but intensified. I was appalled, but this time not stupefied. I rang the bell, called for the housekeeper, and despatched a messenger for Dr. Simpson, who had attended Temple at intervals ever since the evening when I had first called him in.

During the time that necessarily elapsed before he could arrive, I was in an agony; nearly maddened by the feeling of impotence that oppressed me as I saw the frantic struggling of my tortured friend, the joyful chiming of the new year's bells added much to my distraction. I implored him to try to escape; I opened wide the door, and urged him to fly; but he took no heed.

As I heard the sound of rapidly-approaching wheels, I flew to the door, and opened it to the physician. No explanation was needed; and we hastened to Temple's room, accompanied by a strange man whom Dr. Simpson had brought with him. In an instant they had seized Temple, who struggled desperately in their grasp. I saw that my help was necessary, and gave it. Ultimately we succeeded in carrying him to his bedroom, and laying him exhausted upon his bed.

It is of no use. I have thought it over, and tried in vain to find words in which to describe the ever-varying phenomena of his illness. Any thing I might write would seem too mad for belief, and nothing I could say would do justice to the desperate terror and its fearful manifestations which for two days and two nights convulsed my unhappy friend. The physician and I remained with him night and day, doing all that lay in our power to calm the frenzy that was destroying him. On the morning of the third day Dr. Simpson yielded to my entreaties, and bled him from the arm till syncope ensued.

Dr. Simpson anticipated that after his recovery from this swoon, Temple would be too much exhausted to rally, and would gradually and quietly sink away; but to our horror, with the first sign of restoration, the violent symptoms returned, aggravated tenfold by the extreme weakness of the tortured patient.

The third day passed, a day of greater anguish even than the two preceding, and as night came on Temple's frenzy increased to raging madness.

"God help me! I must take the consequences!" said Dr. Simpson, and again he bled Temple in the arm. Two minutes after the operation, and though he had scarcely lost any blood, he threw his head back with a peculiar jerking motion, and was dead. I raised his head to lay it upon the pillow, and in so doing I displaced the bedclothes. Something fell to the floor with a ringing, metallic sound: I looked to see what caused it, and took up a small piece of a knife-blade, about an inch and a half in length. Temple had once shown me the broken knife with which he had stabbed Guandano, and I recognised this as the missing portion of the

blade. How it came there I had no means of knowing, but its presence seemed to confirm Temple's hideous story, if confirmation had been needed. I struggled for a moment with a feeling which I believed to be the sickness of death, and was conscious of nothing more till I found myself some hours later on the couch in my own room, Dr. Simpson standing by my side.

It was not for some days that I made any inquiry as to Temple's burial, and it was a great relief when the physician told me that he had made every necessary arrangement. I do not know, nor do I wish to know, where he is buried.

The Death-Wish.

IN the latter part of my life I seem to have been led forward blind-folded by my fate. I have always struggled in vain to form a fixed resolution on any important point. The overpowering tide of Circumstance has borne all obstacles before it, and I am hurried along by a destiny that makes me shudder for the past and tremble for the future. It eases my burning brain and terror-stricken heart to write these lines. Although my expressions may appear overstrained, they are not so; wait until you have heard my story,—the sketch of only a short period of my life,—short with regard to days and hours, but to my own mind an age.

Many years ago, never mind time nor place, I loved and was deceived, cruelly, heartlessly deceived. I resolved then that I would never again suffer from the cruel deception of one whom I loved. One of my many vacillating resolutions was then made. I determined that no woman's charms, no woman's love, should ever again tempt me from the stated routine of my life.

For twenty years from the time I have referred to, until about a year ago, neither woman's smile nor woman's will have ever had any response from me. I am not yet an old man, although these treacherous gray hairs might deceive any one. It is only within the last few months that they have appeared.

I first met Clara Belford in the north of England, at the country house of an old friend, Mr. Attwood. There was a large party of guests assembled, and every one was expected to amuse himself in the way that best suited his own taste. Shortly after being introduced to Clara, I learned that she was engaged to be married to her cousin, Arthur Chetwynd, who was detained in London, but was expected to join the party in about a week. For the reasons I have before stated, this information concerning her engagement did not make any difference in my manner or conversation with her. Clara appeared to me to be a pretty girl, with a bright complexion, a merry laugh, a good seat on horseback, and one who could say something more than "Yes" or "No" in conversation. I consequently enjoyed her company and friendship very much.

I will say more than this. When I first saw Miss Belford, she appeared to me to be totally unlike my ideal of female beauty; for in my self-confidence it was my firm belief that I could study and be surrounded by beauty without feeling its influence, in fact that I could stand in the midst of flames and not be scorched. Clara Belford was rather below the middle height; her head was beautifully shaped, and well set on her shoulders. A luxuriant mass of dark-brown hair, drawn back from a square low forehead, and small but not very regular features, seemed only the framework to the picture of her eyes, which were indeed most beautiful. Can I ever, indeed, forget those deep violet orbs with their mysterious inner

light? Ah, fatal eyes!—eyes that first taught me that wondrous power which has embittered my life, and left me nothing now but racking remorse and despair.

Notwithstanding the unimpressible and passionless course of life I had marked out for myself, I could not help observing after a few days that Clara was very partial to my company. By some chance or another we were always together, whether riding in the country, walking in the grounds, or sitting in the house. One fact, however, I knew and kept to myself,—I can confess it now,—I dare not look straight into her eyes. From the moment I had met her I had never done so; a strange, indefinable fear possessed me that, if our eyes met, evil would result. However, that occurrence did happen at last.

One morning Mr. Attwood, accompanied by most of the gentlemen of our party, set off on a fishing excursion up the river. I stayed behind, having some letters to write for town. I sat in my own apartment; but the sun was shining so brightly out of doors, that I was continually longing to be out, and this desire was strengthened by seeing from my window Miss Belford with our host's only child, little Edith, one of the most charming and lovely children I ever met with. Locking up my papers, I hastened to join them, and proposed a walk. This, however, little Edith could not do, as she was required within doors by her governess. We therefore left her behind, full of life and gaiety; and as we walked towards the park we heard her ringing laugh as she ran to the house, promising to join us when her lesson was done.

Clara and I strolled on together through the park, or rather through a long narrow plantation that bordered one side of the park. It was morning in Midsummer, and the warm sunlight came filtering through the cool green leaves overhead, and lay upon the dark green moss of our path like golden embroidery. Our conversation, by some chance or other, had turned upon the expression and effect of the human eye. I think now that Clara had purposely introduced the subject. I can remember hearing her say, that it was a vulgar error to suppose that a man betrayed guilt or insincerity when he did not look you in the face; and on the contrary, that guilt and deceit often look at you more boldly and openly than innocence. I assented, but did not look up. That inexpressible dread of meeting her eyes was stealing over me. Again she spoke—

“You will pardon me, I know, Mr. Faulkland, if what I say appears personal; but you yourself never look at me when you speak to me. I observe that when you speak to others you look at them; pray, have I offended you?”

I tried to laugh the question away, saying that I was afraid of her captivating glances, but I still continued to look at the ground. But she was not to be put off; she insisted, laughingly, upon my answer.

We were walking along very slowly, her hand resting in my arm, when she suddenly stopped, saying,

“You are trembling, Mr. Faulkland; what is the matter?”

I turned, all my resolution fading, and looked right into her deep beautiful eyes. It was only for an instant that our eyes met; but a shock like that of electricity passed through my whole frame, and I positively staggered under its force. Recovering myself, I saw that Clara had turned deadly pale; her face was fixed with a fearful expression, her arms were stretched out before her, and her hands seemed grappling with an unseen adversary. In an instant she ceased, and, pressing both her hands convulsively against her heart, would have fallen if I had not supported her. When she had partly recovered, she asked me, in a faint voice, to assist her back to the house. We walked slowly along the green shade, until we were about to turn off to the garden-path that led towards the house, when she again stopped. During this homeward walk, I could not help perceiving that a new feeling had sprung up in my heart,—a feeling as if a trust had been reposed in me; that I was bound henceforth to love and protect the fragile little girl at my side.* When she stopped, I was not afraid, as before, to look at her; on the contrary, it was she now who looked upon the ground.

"Mr. Faulkland," she said, after a short pause, "I am somewhat at a loss to express myself. I ought to apologise for my seeming weakness a short time ago. I am not subject to such attacks, and I need hardly say to you that it was no piece of affected young-ladyism on my part."

"I entreat," I said, "that you will not think of the matter in that light for one instant. I am glad to see that you are recovered; and I may tell you now, that I have always feared that some misfortune would arise if our glances met. I am seldom wrong in these surmises."

She stood in the checkered shade of the trees, the little patches of sunlight dancing over her brown hair and her light dress. Her little white jewelled hands moved nervously together, but her eyes were still fixed upon the ground, and as I gazed on the dark fringe of eye-lash that shaded her still pale face, I felt springing up in my breast a deep love for her,—a love subdued and kept under for the best part of a life-time. Where were all my resolutions now? All fled. I longed to clasp her to my heart, and burning words of love were on my tongue, when, still without raising her eyes, she laid her hand upon my arm, and said,

"There is one question that I wish to ask you. It may only arise from my weakness and nervousness: but when—when—your eyes met mine a short time ago, was there any particular thought passing through your mind?"

"Nothing," I answered, "except that I thought your eyes were very beautiful."

She seemed annoyed, and, waving her hands slightly, said,

"Did no passing thought or wish come into your mind just before or just as you looked into my eyes. Any thing about any body in the house, or connected with the gentleman in whose house we are staying? Pray tell me."

Then I recollected that, just at the period she referred to, there passed

across my mind a wish that something might happen in our host's family that would break up the party. It was a selfish wish, arising from the uncomfortable feeling I had at that moment towards Miss Belford, arising from the indescribable presentiment I have before referred to. I told her, half laughing, of this wish. I saw her turn even paler as I spoke; her hands dropped to her side, and she shook her head, saying sadly,

"I knew it. That wish, as you uttered it mentally, sank into my heart, and I feel a deadly certainty that something terrible will result from it."

I did not understand her meaning then,—God knows I remembered her words long afterwards,—but seeing that she appeared much overcome and shocked, I supported her back to the house. Neither of us spoke. As we approached the door, we were conscious that something unusual had occurred. One of the servants came running towards us, and asked if we had seen his master, Mr. Attwood. I told him that I believed he had gone up the river fishing. The man, who appeared terrified, rushed away in the direction I indicated without any explanation. I passed on with Miss Belford towards the hall, where we found every one in consternation. Servants and guests were hurrying in every direction, and it was some time before I learned the startling truth. Little Edith was dead. Clara Belford, on hearing the dreadful announcement, with a suppressed scream, clung to my arm, murmuring,

"I knew it,—I knew it. My God, that it should have come to this!"

Still I did not fully appreciate the awful nature of the catastrophe that had occurred. I handed my companion, more dead than alive seemingly, to some of the ladies, and then made further inquiries. From what I gathered, it seemed that little Edith had been sitting in the study reading with her governess, the latter sitting in the window recess, and the former at the table. Suddenly the governess was surprised to see the little girl rise from her seat, with a strange expression of surprise and terror in her face. She walked a few steps towards the door, which was shut, and holding out her hands said,

"What is it, Miss Belford? Dear Miss Belford, what have I done?" and then, with a piercing scream, she fell, her fingers convulsively working round her neck, as if trying vainly to remove something that was strangling her. The governess cried for assistance, which was immediately at hand; but it was all of no avail—in a few moments little Edith breathed her last.

I heard afterwards, round her throat were discovered several marks, as if she had been strangled by the hands of some one. The doctors said she had died of epilepsy, and these marks were soon forgotten by all but me.

The events of that day, after I had received this intelligence, passed by me like the events of a confused dream. The coincidence, for such I took it to be, at first appeared strange; but the extraordinary remarks of Miss Belford, and the last words of the dying child, smote me with a feel-

ing of terror and dismay. I wandered in and about the house in a semi-conscious state. I remember seeing several of the visitors leaving, and have an indistinct recollection of Mr. Attwood's return, and his wild excess of grief. A guilty feeling seemed to haunt my heart, and a voice appeared to be ever murmuring in my ear, "Thou art the man!"

Evening came, and then night. I found out that none of the guests remained in the house except Miss Belford and myself. An uncontrollable wish to see her and speak to her took possession of me, but I learned that she was still too unwell to leave her room. Mr. Attwood and his wife, also, were so overcome with their grief, that I could not see them. I felt the room that I was in grow close and oppressive, so I again left the house and wandered out into the park. The moon was just rising, but the only light was the diffused light of the countless stars.

I wandered on moodily to the spot where I had last spoken to Clara. Although the terrible event which had happened filled my mind with apprehension and fear, still through all I felt that my new love glowed fiercely. I longed to see her, to pour out my whole heart to her. Then the thought of her betrothal to another struck me, but I at once set it aside. Let me only see her; let me only tell her how deeply, how passionately I love her; let me hear her refusal from her own lips, and I will be satisfied. These were my thoughts as I plunged, in a strange mingling of feelings, into the dark wood. I walked along the same path which we had taken in the morning. There was not a breath of wind stirring, and through the openings in the trees I could see the landscape just commencing to gleam out under the beams of the full moon. Every thing around was still and peaceful. I pictured to myself, as I walked along, the quiet, sombre room where little Edith, so full of life and smiles in the morning, now lay dead and cold, with the blue, livid finger-marks on her white throat. I pictured also the deep grief of the bereaved father and mother, and the bitter tears welled up into my eyes. I crushed my hands over my face and sobbed aloud. At this moment I thought I heard a rustling among the trees behind me, but I could see no one. I looked round the place, but it was too dark—there was no one visible. I turned back towards the house, but could not get rid of the idea that some one was following me. I walked faster, and at length arrived at the open space at the end of the walk. The moon was now shining brightly on the broad white gravel-path. I stepped aside under the shadow of a large lime-tree, and determined to wait and see if any one had been really following me. I had not to wait long. Slowly out of the dark path, slowly into the bright moon-light, came the one form that in my strange, wild desire I most wished to see. The instant she came into the full light, I recognised Clara Belford.

When I walked up to her, she did not start,—she did not even look up; she held out both her hands, which I took in mine, and then she spoke.

"Mr. Faulkland, I have been wishing all this evening to speak to

you. I thought I should find you near this spot; but when I came up to you I was afraid to speak. I know not, even now, how to say all that I mean. You must think it strange that I should seek you here, and speak to you in this way; but the events of this day seem to have changed my whole nature. I find myself, in a manner totally inexplicable, to be subject to you. Ever since that strange instant when our eyes met, I have felt that I am completely under the power and control of your will. I know not whether you exercise that power willingly and consciously; but if you do, I can only entreat you to have mercy. If you knew the dreadful pang that passed through my heart this morning,—if you could conceive the dreadful hours of anguish and terror that I have endured since,—you would have pity upon me."

She said this in a faltering manner, her hands clasped in mine, and her eyes still fixed on the ground, while tears glistened upon her long eye-lashes.

"Miss Belford—Clara," I said, "believe me, that any power or influence that I may seem to exercise over your mind or your will is not exerted willingly. I know not by what strange fatality we have thus been brought together; but this I can tell you, that in the moment to which you have several times referred, resolutions that I had kept for years were broken. I had sworn never to love again; and now, even if these are the last words I shall ever speak to you, I must tell you that I love you with all the strength and passion of my heart."

She struggled, and endeavoured to free her hands; but I held them fast, while I watched her pale face, now wet with tears, pitilessly, in the passionate torrent of words that I uttered. I cannot remember now what I said. All I know is, that I prayed, I implored her to return my love, because my heart was hers for ever.

After a short silence, she answered, comparatively calmly,

"Again, Mr. Faulkland, I must appeal to your pity, your commiseration, and I am sure that I will not appeal in vain. You must know—you must have heard—that my hand is engaged. With my hand must go my heart. For four years I have been engaged to my cousin, Arthur Chetwynd. I love him, I have always loved him; and never, until this day, has there been one thought of mine untrue or unloyal to him. Nay, sir, hear me patiently. I met you here, and have respected and enjoyed your friendship. Never, however, until the moment when our eyes met, and that fatal wish crossed your mind, has there been any feeling save that of friendship towards you in my heart; and now, Heaven only knows wherefore, now—"

"Now, dearest Clara!" I said hurriedly.

"Now," she said, almost in a whisper, "I know that I love you. Pity me, Faulkland. Remember that by every law of right and honour I am bound to my cousin Arthur. I feel assured that you are a gentleman and a man of honour. Respect my secret. Let us part here to-night for ever. I have been so ill, so unhappy, so wretched, that I

thought my mind would never be at rest until I had spoken to you, and told you all. Have pity upon me,—not another word. Let us say farewell, and part—part for ever.”

I stooped down and kissed her brow, whiter than the whitest marble in the moonlight. She raised her eyelids; and, for the second time, our glances met.

Great heavens! what a shock flashed through my being! What devil, what demon prompted the wish, and blended with it the name of Arthur Chetwynd in my mind. The wish was slight, slight as a gossamer thread; still it was uttered—uttered in my heart. That awful reproachful glance of Clara’s eyes, as she stood there, with her arms moving convulsively, and her nervous hands glittering in the moonlight, will haunt me to my death. At last, with a piercing cry, she fell fainting to the ground.

Stunned and giddy myself, from the palpable shock which I had received, it was some time before I recovered presence of mind to lift her and carry her to the house. I thought she was dead. A messenger was immediately despatched for the nearest medical man, and I entreated the servants not to disturb their master and mistress. Every exertion was made to rouse Miss Belford from the swoon into which she had fallen; and to my intense gratification, after some time, I perceived that she was recovering. But a great change seemed to have come over her features. She looked old, and her cheeks were sunken and fuded.

The surgeon at last came, and reported, before midnight, that with care and quiet she would recover, but that her system had received a severe shock. Her illness was entirely attributed to the painful event of the morning.

I could not sleep; and as I had made preparations for leaving early in the morning, I waited until the time for my departure should arrive. Just before leaving, a note was put into my hand. One glance at the writing showed me that it was from Miss Belford.

I opened it hurriedly, and read as follows:

“Go at once. For Heaven’s sake, let us never meet again. Our eyes have now met twice, and each time it seemed as if a knife had been driven into my breast. A third meeting, and my life will be the forfeit. God grant that your last wish may not prove as fatal as the first.

CLARA.”

I crushed the letter up in my hand, took my seat in the dog-cart that was waiting, and left for the railway-station. When there, I got into a carriage full of passengers; and this, together with the hurry and confusion of travelling, prevented my mind from dwelling too much on the events that had occurred. We arrived at length at a junction-station, where the train from the South had not yet arrived, and at which we were obliged to remain until it did arrive.

I walked about the platform, and in a conversation with one of the

porters I learned that an accident had occurred the night before in the night-express coming from London. It appeared that just before coming up to the station the guard of the train heard loud cries coming from one of the first-class carriages near to his box. By leaning out he perceived that the voice issued from a compartment in which he knew that a young man was travelling alone. The light from the lamp inside the carriage threw its reflection on the railway outside as they hurried along, and the guard fancied he saw the shadow of some one gesticulating violently. The cries became louder, and the guard signalled to the engine-man to stop; but at that instant the train slackened speed, and came into the station. On stopping, the guard ran to the carriage, and on opening the door found the young man lying insensible on the floor, his eyes almost starting from their sockets, his face purple, and blood gushing from his mouth. He was immediately conveyed to the neighbouring hotel, and a physician, who happened to be travelling by the express, attended to him at once. Nevertheless he expired about an hour afterwards, without regaining consciousness. The station-master, who came up as we were talking, corroborated the statement, and said in addition that the only distinguishable words that the young gentleman had uttered were, "Clara, Clara!" in accents of sorrowful reproach. A horrible suspicion suddenly started in my mind, and was confirmed as I heard him further relate that the physician had discovered blue and livid marks, like the impression of fingers, round his throat, and that those finger-marks seemed to have been made by small slender fingers, like those of a girl.

Merciful powers! I could hardly believe my senses. The event must have occurred at the very time when Clara and I were standing on the path-way in the moonlight.

"Tell me," said I, as a last fatal certainty, "was the name of the young gentleman discovered?"

The South train at this moment came up, and he answered hurriedly as he left me, "The name on the portmanteau was Mr. Chetwynd."

* , * * * *

To this moment I cannot tell you how I arrived at my rooms in London. I have a terrible recollection that my brain seemed burning, and that I was consumed by an intolerable, raging thirst. I have faint recollections of my servant hovering about my bed, and the faces of friends seen for an instant, like the faces of the dead seen in our dreams.

For six months I was prostrated by an attack of brain-fever, from which I recovered at last, broken down in health and spirits.

I resolved to leave the country, and spend the rest of my existence in some far-off land. However, with my old habit of breaking my resolutions, I changed my mind at the last moment, and went off without warning to a lonely little cottage on the coast of South Wales. I had once seen this cottage on a tour, and had little trouble in engaging it for myself alone.

In this retreat, I lived the life of a hermit, keeping out of the way of human beings, and seldom seeing any. My cottage, or rather hut, was as lonely as could well be conceived. It was situated in a small ravine between the limestone cliffs that border the shore, and a wild barren moor stretched for miles behind. Except the cry of the sea-birds, and the mournful moan of the sea as it ebbcd and flowed through the black seaweedy rocks to and from the sea-line of white dazzling limestone, I could hear no sound.

I contrived to pass some weeks away in this place, my only companions being my fishing-line and fowling-piece. My mind became apathetic, and I gloomily dreamed on of living there till my life was over. But this was not to be.

It was an afternoon towards the end of autumn; I had been wandering about the limestone ridge all day long with my gun, and coming home tired, lay down among the heather to watch the sun setting behind a long bank of purple clouds edged with glowing gold.

Almost insensibly, and utterly against my inclination, my fancy travelled back to the memorable time that I spent in the north of England. I traced each event in turn, and called up in imagination the graceful and lithesome form of Clara Belford. My heart was softened,—my stubborn resolution vanished,—I felt all my deep love returning,—and I could not help wishing in my heart of hearts that she was with me. Immediately afterwards, I trembled with a vague apprehension and a strange foreboding of evil. I rose up sadly, and walked homewards in my old apathetic humour, while the shadows of evening fell darker and darker about my path.

The next day the weather changed. There was a heavy gale from the south-west, and great masses of black cloud rolled overhead. The fierce wind blowing in from the Atlantic swept up the Bristol Channel, roaring as it passed up my little ravine, and then moaning far away over the waste moor-land beyond. The drenching rain seemed part of the wind and the clouds, and never ceased beating against the window and roof of my cottage.

All day long, wrapped up in my oil-skin cape, I wandered about, watching the little vessels far out at sea battling with the wind, and the great angry waves rolling in with a thundering sound, and breaking in snow-white foam among the rocks below.

Night came on, and the storm increased in violence. I retreated at last into my cottage, barred the door and window, and lighted my reading-lamp. My stock of books was very small, consisting only of a few volumes treating on the occult and mystic arts.

I had been reading for some time, raising my head at intervals to listen to the wild sough of the gale, and the dull, monotonous roar of the waves, when I thought I heard amidst the tumult a cry like that of a human voice. Whilst I was pondering whether it was only a sound of imagination or not, I distinctly heard it repeated. It seemed close at

hand, nay, just at the outside of the door. A strange terror took possession of me, and I rose up trembling.

Once more the storm dashed the rain violently against the cottage, and then I heard the wind go moaning away up the valley over the moor. There was a lull after that, and then I heard a slight rapping at the door. Slight as the sound was, it filled me with terrible apprehension. A cold sweat broke out over me, and I trembled from head to foot. As I stood there terror-stricken, I heard, or fancied I heard, my own name called from without. Great heavens! I recognised the voice, ay, even amid the raging of the storm. In an instant I staggered to the door, and opened it. Holding it open against the storm, I saw that a dark indistinct figure was crouching on the threshold. My heart told me who it was. I lifted up the fragile form, and, closing the door with the other hand, bore the dark burden into the room. Wet through and through by the driving rain, worn out and utterly overcome with long travel in the pitiless storm, I held her in my arms, and, drawing back the dark shawl from her face, I gazed once more on the pallid features of Clara Belford.

She was insensible; but oh, how changed! She was barely twenty years old when I saw her last, little more than a year ago, and now she looked old, very old, and haggard. Her cheeks were sunken, and her dark-brown hair, that I remembered so beautifully bright, hung dishevelled over her face and shoulders; it was silvery white.

I placed her in my only chair, and chafed her hands, and called her by every endearing name I could remember; until I saw her pale lips begin to move.

The storm still raged without, and I was compelled to listen with my ear close to her mouth. Every word sounded distinctly, although she only spoke in a faltering whisper.

"Faulkland, you called me yesterday,—do not start,—you called me to you as you lay on the heath at sunset. I could not choose but obey; and I am here. Once before I entreated you not to use the power that you possess over me willingly. You have done so: I was compelled to obey, and I am here. I have travelled many a weary mile. I remember now nothing of my journey; I have been drawn like a needle by the magnet. Hush! let me speak, for I feel that my strength is failing. I have somehow that faith in you, that I cannot believe that you have killed me willingly. Yet now,—I must say it,—each time that our eyes have met, a fatal wish was lingering in your heart. Each wish, slight as it was, was accomplished, and each accomplished wish took with it part of my little life. Now, Faulkland, let me go in peace."

I was rendered speechless by terror, by pity, by remorse, by a hundred conflicting sensations; and as she ceased I raised her drooping head, and the wet gray hair fell over my arms and breast. I saw her heavy eye-lids raised once more—slowly, slowly; once more I gazed upon those deep, dark, violet eyes. It was fatality! What else could have prompted the thought, then and there as I gazed, that it were better for both if we

both were dead? As the fatal wish flashed across me, I felt her shudder in my arms; I saw her beautiful eyes glaze over with the opal hue of death; I felt her slight form grow heavy in my arms, and slip from me to the ground.

The wild storm howled and moaned dismally without, and the breakers dashed sullenly among the surf below; whilst I, wishing for the death that would not come, stood in the flickering lamp-light with the corpse of Clara Belford at my feet cold and still.

A. G. G.

Other Worlds.

Other worlds. Those planets evermore
On their golden orbits swiftly glide on—
From quick Hermes by the solar shore
To remote Poseidon.

Are they like this earth? The glory shed
From the ruddy dawn's unfading portals—
Does it fall on regions tenanted
By a race of mortals?

Are there merry maidens, wicked-eyed,
Peeping slyly through the cottage lattice?
Have they vintage-bearing countries wide?
Have they oyster-patties?

Have they silent shady forest-realms,
Odorous violets that in grassy nooks hide,
Aged oaks and great ancestral elms
Growing by the brookside?

Does a mighty ocean roar and break
On dark rocks and sandy shores fantastic?
Have they any Darwins there to make
Theories elastic?

Have they landscapes that would set a flat alight
With their beauty? Have they snow-necked clerici?
Poets who be-rhyme each whirling satellite?
Dr. Temple's heresy?

Does their weather change? November fog—
Weeping April—March with many a raw gust?
And do thunder and demented dog
Come to them in August?

Nineteenth-century science should unravel
All these queries, but has somehow missed 'em.
When will it be possible to travel
Through the Solar System?

MORTIMER COLLINS.

Euthanasia.

LET the weary world go round ;
 What care I ?
 Life's a surfeiting of sound ;
 I would die.

It would be so sweet to lie
 Under waving grasses,
 Where a maiden's footsteps sly,
 Tremulous for a lover nigh,
 Sometimes passes.

Why—why remain ?
 Graves are the sheltering wimples
 Against Life's rain ;
 Graves are the sovereign simples
 Against Life's pain ;
 Graves are a mother's dimples,
 When we complain.

O Death ! beautiful Death !
 Why do they thee disfigure ?
 To me thy touch, thy breath
 Hath nor alarm nor rigour.
 Thee do I long await ;
 I think thee very late ;
 I pine much to be going.
 Others have gone before :
 I hunger more and more
 To know what they are knowing.

Boy, boy ! be thou content !
 Accept thy banishment !
 Like smaller sorrows, Life will end for thee.
 Yet for a little while
 Bear with this harsh exile,
 And Death will soften, and will send for thee !

ALFRED AUSTIN

With Mr. Gorilla's Compliments.

My family having been grossly scandalised for many years by persons none of whom can boast the honour of even a personal acquaintance with us, and by far the majority of those who talk so very loudly about our affairs, and the way we manage matters on the Gaboon, never having set eyes on us, or even been within a hundred miles of the country, I naturally feel it incumbent upon me to set the great Gorilla nation right with humanity generally. My attention has been called more especially to the absurd stories recently told by a Frenchman, who knows just as much about us as his countrymen do of their neighbours across the English Channel. I have read a Frenchman's account of how the English live on raw meat, and drink nothing but a dark mixture of tobacco-juice and treacle, which they call "porter;" and how all the members of the Jocky Club always go to evening parties in top-boots, spurs, and red coats; but *we* don't believe this any more than we do the stories we have heard from English sailors about Frenchmen living upon frogs and coffee. Then, let me beg you will not believe all that this wonderful traveller tells you, for we don't know him, and all that he knows of us and our habits he has picked up in his gossipings with the dirty black niggers,—a set of people who have always been trying to curry favour with you, and would be certain never to let an opportunity slip for lowering us, who are as good blood as them any day. They happen to have got taken up by the upper classes, who only despise them in their hearts; and with this they are so tossed up with pride, that they are ready to cut the throats of all their poorer relations. They say we drag them down; they forget that we are of the old stock of Primates, and that if it hadn't been for some of us, as your great philosopher Mr. Darwin will tell you, there would have been no Bushmen; and if there had been no Bushmen, there would have been no Negroes; and I should like to know where all you white people would have been if there had been no Negroes? Why, *Adam* was a man of colour, as you know. He was made of red earth, and took his name accordingly; he was no doubt a copper-coloured primate. Then there came *Esau*, his near descendant; he was a hairy man. And as to that, why, if our upper ten thousand, the Chimpanzees, who, we admit, have more brains than we have, and only want education to become quite equal to many men, had not taught your ancestors that two hands were quite enough for a man, and that the other two might be better employed in walking, who knows but your lot would have been cast in with ours? Let me remind you of what the Negroes are well aware of, and which makes them so spiteful against us,—we are a silent race; we know better than expose ourselves as some people do; we rarely utter a word, when we do it is forcible and to the point; but we think a great deal. We have our opinions, and amongst ourselves, in private society, there is, I assure you, no lack of

conversation. We know very well that Nature never makes a leap, and we have watched the best of you crawling on all fours just as our children do, and with no better notions of helping themselves than ours; indeed, I suspect not quite as good, for our youngsters at three years old are turned out into the world, able to get a living and fight their own battles. Every thing must have a beginning, and the greatest men have sprung sometimes from very humble stock. There is a story, which was told amongst us with great glee, about your famous Alexandre Dumas,—a man of colour in more senses than one—it was this. An impertinent fellow, as it might be, one of our nigger acquaintances, questioned him of his family, his father, his grandfather, and so on, when Dumas (as my French is rather rusty, I tell it in English), getting angry, replied to his question,—“But your great-grandfather?”—“Ah, I don’t know; perhaps he was an ape, in which case my ancestry begins where yours ends.” We are naturally proud of this; we accept the compliment from so distinguished a member of the family, though we all felt for our nearer relative, who thus got snubbed for not having made the best of the advantages of cultivation,—a disability under which *Troglodytes* suffer as well as the genus *Homo*. As to ancestry, we have our traditions. The same country which we hold now was inhabited by our forefathers for many centuries,—I may say, without vain boasting, for ages. We are disposed now, as we were in ancient times, to defend our home against invaders. We have a place in the history of the ancients, as you may be aware from a rare record by one Hanno, a Carthaginian navigator or admiral, preserved, it is said, in your University of Oxford.* According to our traditions, these first explorers of your kind known to us sailed up a river and landed upon an island then in our possession. Our people fled, making a brave attempt at defence by throwing stones. None of the men fell into the hands of the enemy; but the women, not being so well able to run, three of them were taken prisoners and were carried away.

[Referring to Hanno’s account, we find he says that after sailing three days up a river, they came to a gulf with an island, on which they landed, and saw many wild hairy men,—*ἄνθρωποι ἄγριοι*,—and women also covered with hair; the native interpreters they had with them called these creatures *γορίλλας*. They tried to catch them, but the men escaped, being as nimble as rope-walkers—*κρεμνοβάτοι ὄντες*; they caught hold of trees and rocks, and defended themselves by throwing stones as they ran. Three women, however, were caught; but they bit and scratched so, that they were obliged to kill them. Their skins were carried as trophies to Carthage, and there placed in the Temple of Juno. These skins are also distinctly proved to have been placed in this temple by the reference of Pliny to them. He, however, mystifies the matter by substituting the name *Gorgones* for *Gorillas*; but his words are, “*Penetravit in eas*

* *Λεγόμενος Περικλῆους. Geographica Veteri Scriptores Graeci Minores*, vol. i. Oxon. 1698.—Ed. T. B.

(*Gorgades Insulas*) Hanno Pœnorum imperator, prodiditque hirta foeminarum corpora duarumque Gorgonum cutes argumenti et miraculi gratia in Junonis templo posuit spectatas, usque ad Carthaginem captam." These skins were seen there at the taking of Carthage by the Romans. It was about 500 years B.C. that Hanno was chosen, with Himilco, by the Carthaginians, when at the height of their prosperity, to explore neighbouring countries and to establish colonies. Himilco sailed towards Europe; but Hanno passed the columns of Hercules (Gibraltar) with his fleet of sixty ships, carrying three thousand men, women, and children; and though some geographers think he never got beyond Cape Blanco, others think he reached Senegal and Guinea; while M. Dureau de la Malle, who has especially studied the antiquity of the Gorilla, considers that the animals having been seen by Hanno, and the name so decidedly recorded, is a proof that the Gaboon was reached. M. Geoffroy St. Hilaire thinks the hairy people must have been Chimpanzees, as they would be found near the coast, while the Gorilla is an inhabitant of the inland forests, and is too fierce and courageous to run away. The name, remarkable as it is in its antiquity, says little; it has of course only been revived by Mr. Savage, and may have been applied by Hanno to the smaller animal.]

If you Caucasians,—I say nothing of Bushmen, Negroes, Esquimaux, and people of that sort,—pique yourselves upon being descended from old families, as we know that you do, you must allow that we have the advantage of you. What, indeed, are all the classic allusions of your poets to PAN, the spirit of Nature, and his race of sylvan deities, but a confession of our being the true type of the natural man? And does not the taste of the best of you for hunting and leading a wild life in the woods betray our common ancestry? Do you not make rather a boast that the instincts of the savage crop out in your most cultivated societies, showing itself now in a prize-fight, then in fashionable views about muscular Christianity? We have no battles; we don't murder one another; we don't even eat up our enemies, as some of you do that I could name. It is a calumny to say, as your travellers often have, that our braves lie in wait for human victims passing through the woods, and seize them by the hair of their heads, dragging them up into trees to be devoured; or that Gorillas have ever used their feet in strangling men by seizing them by the neck. Neither is it worth my while to refute those odious stories of our largest and finest Gorillas running away with your women, as your barons of old were so fond of doing, and thought such a very gallant enterprise. I repeat, that we are peaceable natives of the woods, living upon fruit and vegetable food entirely: we are not brigands, and we never make a foray upon any thing but sugar-canes. If our monkey is put up, that's quite a different thing; then we can match the bravest of you. It is quite true that most of our tribe whom you have got in your museums, and, I believe, all those procured by this Du Chaillu, were shot in the back: they were taken at a disadvantage, and killed in a cowardly

manner. M. du Chaillu tells a fine story about his combat with our king, in which he cleverly contrives to add to his own glory by exalting the terrible prowess of his adversary. For our sake, I wish it was true, but for his own it were better he had never related the adventure, for it is all a fudge. None of our tribe have ever yet fought with white men. It is true that a king or chief of ours was some years ago (1855) killed, and his body carried off by some blacks, who sold it to some of your traders; and I believe this noble fellow is now to be seen in the Museum at Vienna. The individual described by M. du Chaillu is quite a commoner; he never would have been chosen by us as a chief,—for we think a great deal of bodily strength: all our heroes have been very tall, strong men; and here again I would remind you that your Hercules and Theseus are evidently borrowed from us. The hero whose remains you exhibit at Vienna stands full six feet six, while the pretended antagonist of M. du Chaillu measures only five feet six. For the last thirty years the black men, who are much more ferocious and cruel than we are, and who, as you know, always eat one another after a fight, because they are too idle to bury their dead, have been trying to kidnap our tribe to sell us for slaves. This cruel practice they have learnt from you white people; and when they cannot catch us alive, they are mean enough to sell our dead bodies, or even our skins and bones, for trifling sums. We are aware that in this way have been obtained those of our nation who are in the Paris Museum, at Brussels, at Leyden, the individual who was shown at Havre (in 1836), and another at Boston, America (in 1847). Ngina, a noted Gorilla chief of ours, was in this way killed, and sold, after he had been hawked about by those rascally niggers, to Dr. Franquet; and the French Admiral Penaud was good enough to give him a barrel of spirits and stuff to preserve the body. This was in 1852; and it was certainly a melancholy satisfaction to his relatives on the Gaboon to know that Ngina, the first of our race taken in the flesh,—for all the others you got were only skins,—was received with profound respect and consideration at the great *Exposition Universelle* of 1855. Here, indeed, Ngina was under the especial protection of M. Geoffroy St. Hilaire, to whom our tribe owes an everlasting debt of gratitude for his constant endeavours to raise the condition and merits of *Troglodytes* in general. The Paris public also testified their regard for our race by the avidity with which they purchased a very admirable statuette portrait, modelled by an eminent sculptor, and under the immediate direction of the great naturalist Geoffroy himself. Speaking of portraits of our family, I beg particularly to say that those exhibited by M. du Chaillu are what you call “dealer’s portraits.” They are all copies, and very bad ones too. The full-length which forms the frontispiece to his “Adventures” is a mutilated copy from the coloured lithograph by M. Boucourt, which is in the paper by M. Geoffroy St. Hilaire.* The portrait of a young Gorilla is also a bad copy from the

* Contributed in 1858 to the *Archives du Museum*. This specimen measures 1 metre 67,—about 5 feet 6.—ED. T. B.

excellent drawings of the two children—a boy and girl—kidnapped from our country in 1851, and sent in spirits to Paris. In fact, no portrait from the life has ever left the Gaboon, and for the best of reasons,—the niggers are the only human beings that have ever seen any of us, except those miserable invalids dragged about by Yankee skippers and others on the coast; and they never could be persuaded to sit. If M. du Chaillu had seen so many Gorillas, and actually shot the twenty-two he says he did, he cannot be any cleverer than the blacks if he did not make an attempt at a portrait. He has nevertheless drawn a *Nshiego mbouwe*—what he calls a nest-building ape—sitting under his thatch of branches, all wonderfully well drawn,—rather too well, in fact. Was this done on the spot? If it was, then he might have drawn our portraits. If it was done to order, like the other illustrations of his “Adventures,” then it has no truth or value. Some cousins of ours are in the habit of choosing snug places on the branches of trees, where large ferns and such-like spreading plants grow out, and form a very good natural shelter. I dare say M. du Chaillu has heard of these individuals, and it struck him his book would be more complete if he could give a fancy sketch of one of them “at home,” with a fancy description of how he had the trees cut down so as to examine the construction of this sort of umbrella-roof. If you compare the drawing of a young nest-building ape with one of a young Chimpanzee taken from life in the Jardin des Plantes at Paris, it will at once be seen to be a facsimile; and the same of another, supposed to represent an adult *Nshiego*, which is also a reversed copy from M. St. Hilaire's work. If M. du Chaillu had ever really been amongst us in Gaboon country, he would have learnt that the individual he calls a new species, as *Troglodytes calvus*, was merely one of our Chimpanzee cousins, who form a caste of sages amongst us, and, being given to study, had become bald,—a result which, they say, is not uncommon amongst your literary men.

We grin at the way this M. du Chaillu deceives himself, and hope the scientific naturalists will suspend their judgment until some of them have visited us, when, I venture to say, they will find us not exactly the roaring monsters supposed. As yet no white man has ever seen us *chez nous* but one, of whose visit we have an old tradition. His name was Andrew Battell; and he is well remembered amongst us from the old grudge which every Gorilla owes him for having ridiculed the one especially tender point in which we differ from you: he laughed at us because we had no calves to our legs; but it's my opinion, from what I've seen of Negroes' legs,—I don't know how it may be with your people,—that this distinguishing characteristic is sometimes wanting in the genus *Homo*. I have been told all your great people, when they go into the presence of your Queen, are obliged to show their calves; and it would be such a disgrace to appear without them, that many persons wear false ones. But we know that if most of you had not got legs precisely like ours, you would not have adopted the odd fashion of wearing trousers. We never wear false calves

or trousers, because our beauty is not in the legs, but in the arms; and in this feature we flatter ourselves it would be quite in vain for you to pretend to superiority. With us a long brawny arm, reaching to the middle of the leg, and a large hand, with very short fingers, are esteemed the perfection of Gorilla beauty. *Chacun à son goût.* Allow me to point out another feature, which you consider the most important in a man's face; I mean the nose. We have the best noses of all the Simians; ordinary apes, and even Chimpanzees, have only two holes in the middle of their face, while we have fine expanded nostrils, rather better than most Negroes. Our ears too are considered pretty, and quite manly, compared with the large ears of Negroes and Chimpanzees. Our feet have an advantage over yours in the great toe, which with us is a large thumb; but I am told there is a race of men who live in France who have feet like ours.*

[The Andrew Battell referred to was an old sailor-adventurer, who wrote an account of his "strange adventures," which is fortunately preserved by Purchas, in his curious and rare work, *Pilgrime, or Relation of the World and Religion*, 5 vols. folio, 1625. Andrew, he tells us, was taken prisoner by the Indians in Brazil, and in 1590 was sent on a voyage to the west coast of Africa. Here he was taken from the Indians by the Portuguese settlers at Angola, being afterwards handed over to the natives as a hostage; and living amongst these savages in Congo for eighteen years, he eventually returned to England. His description is far better than M. du Chaillu's, and from the geographical position of the places he visited, it is seen that the country was precisely that of the Gaboon. He says, that in the forests of Mayamba, in the kingdom of Loango, there are two sorts of monsters, the largest one called *Pongo*, and the smaller *Engeco*. He also mentions the name of *Ngina*, as the native word for the large species, which with Gorilla has since been adopted by scientific naturalists as *Gorilla Gina*. Battell says, that both were exactly like men, but much stronger and bigger; their hands, cheeks, and ears are not hairy, except at the parts where the whiskers grow in man; and the eyebrows, which are long and shaggy, hanging over their fierce eyes. The only particular in which he notices a great difference is in their short bandy legs, with no calf. George Smith, in his travels in Guinea, in 1751, speaks of a *Mandrill* and a *Boogoe*; the first evidently a European name, the other is probably Battell's *Pongo*. Other travellers, Noel, Peiresc, and Gassendi, speak of the Gorilla under the name of *Barris*. M. Noel gives a very fabulous account of him, as having a long white beard, venerable, and reported to be a musician! Mr. Bowdich, ambassador from England to Ashante, in 1817, also gave some account of the ourang-outang of Africa, calling it after the name

* These are the turpentine gatherers, who are taught from childhood to climb the fir-trees, in search of the turpentine. They never wear shoes; their great toes are spread out and opposable, like the thumb. These people form a colony of their own, living in the Landes, in the south of France.—Ed. T.B.

familiar to us from childhood, as belonging to the animal found in Borneo, in the Eastern Archipelago. He says, these creatures were not uncommon in the country of the Gaboon. He saw one two and a half feet high, which followed its master about like a dog, and had the face and gait of an old man. This was probably the Chimpanzee, or possibly a young Gorilla, which are now common there. But Mr. Bowdich also tells us, that the natives always spoke of another animal of the same kind, but twice as large, which they called *Ingena*; a word evidently another spelling of the *Ngina*, as we have it. This creature was the favourite subject of conversation, and many wonderful stories were told of it by the natives. It built houses in imitation of the native huts, buried the dead under leaves and branches; but if a very young one died while at the breast, the mother carried it about in her arms till it became putrid.]

The accounts you have hitherto read of us Gorillas are yarns told by the blacks to astonish the whites. But M. du Chaillu, who professes to have spent so many months in the Gorilla country, has very little more precise to tell. He is certainly minute when he speaks; and if you will refer to my friend M. Geoffroy St. Hilaire, you will find that he has not only borrowed his portraits from him, but all his story is founded entirely upon the accounts collected by M. Geoffroy, even to *Ngina* wrenching the gun out of the hunter's hand and biting the barrel, and the practice of waiting till he came within six yards before firing. As to his description of the fight, it is just the old story coloured to suit the taste for sensations; you wonder that a man so small as M. du Chaillu should meet and conquer such a formidable giant of the forest. Observe how he makes us first "Blub, blub, blub," then rise crescendo into a roar like thunder, heard for miles! Now we are neither given to blubbering nor roaring; we have our war-cry, which, of course, we give out with a will, and your traveller Ford described it quite correctly as "Kh-ah! kh-ah!" like the cry of the Chimpanzees, but louder and more terrible. If you ask Professor Owen, he will tell you that none of us *Troglodytes* roar; indeed, we pride ourselves on our voice, which is quite human compared with the growl of the flesh-eating felines and canines. Then this wonderful little Frenchman pictures us advancing to meet him, thumping our chest with rage and defiance. He must excuse me for saying that this is not a habit of ours; it was suggested perhaps by the manners of a more demonstrative people than we are. We are men of few words, and not fond of attitudes. No; this beating the chest has a double meaning: it heightens the combat, and fully accounts for all the traveller's skins having lost the hair on the front of the body. How it happens that they have no more on the back is explained with equal neatness in the pretty description of a faithful husband Gorilla, sitting, rubbing and rocking himself, at the foot of a tree, while his wife sleeps in the branches. M. du Chaillu shows his ignorance of our domestic relations in this: we are polygamists, and, like your sect of the Mormons, we live in commonalties, under one great chief, whose responsibilities are so distributed that he would find it impossible to sit

under the lattice of any one lady in particular; besides, there would be the inconvenient jealousy inevitable from such habits. We have our rural harem, not so luxurious, perhaps, as the King of Dahomey's, in which the prerogatives of the superior sex are maintained with every punctilio. If these honours are challenged, as they may be, and constantly are when the chiefs wax old, the right of battle decides in a manner agreeable to the chivalry of the race, as I might express myself, who shall exercise the marital sway. On these occasions, and, indeed, when any fighting occurs, our women never interfere; it is considered that their whole duty is to look after the children. But you have probably received some accounts of our manners and customs, which I don't mean to say are correct, from M. Aubry Lecomte, M. Gautier Laboullay, M. Franquet, Mr. Ford, and Mr. Savage, whose names are known to some of our tribe, while M. du Chaillu's is not.*

I have said already that no European has ever met a Gorilla in fight; and as to the Negroes, there are very few of them that have the pluck or the strength to encounter us. There are plenty of them at Denis, in the Gaboon, who brag and call themselves hunters; but they have never faced us. They barter for trophies with the Boulous, the only race that has ever been able to cope with us Gorillas. All the other blacks are afraid of us; they call us *Pongo*, which, in their language, is the name for the great *fétiche par excellence*,—the great supernatural being. They are quite right, and the Boulous are infidels, and that is why we are attacked by them. These Negroes know that your learned men have set a price upon our heads, because they wish to settle the great dispute whether we belong to their family or to the brutes. From you they have learnt how to preserve the skins and bodies of our race; they carry them to the ships, and so it happens that any one may come home to you calling himself a great hunter, with any quantity of skins and bones.

The Gaboon, 0° 30' N, August 1861.

Dr. Gray, Superintendent of the Natural-History Collection, British Museum, says, in his contributions to the annals of natural history, that M. de Chaillu's skins were in such a rotten state, from ignorant use of the arsenical paste, that they were declined by all the museums of Europe and America to which they were offered. It is known also that the ears and hoofs of the antelopes were eaten off by rats, and the skeleton of the Gorilla, bought for 50*l.* by our museum, is so damaged as to be worthless. The Gorilla skin, bad as it is, proves saleable to our easy-going trustees for 500*l.*! Lucky M. du Chaillu, to have a friend with a great name,—a naturalist of such power that he has only to raise his

* M. Geoffroy St. Hilaire has accumulated all that has been said upon this subject in the *Archives du Muséum*, vol. x., 1858. Mr. Ford's account is to be found in the *Transactions of the Academy of Natural Sciences*, Philadelphia, vol. vi., 1852 — En. T. B.

finger to transform this little Frenchman into a lion! Dr. Gray asserts, and it has not been contradicted even by Professor Owen, that in all M. du Chaillu's collection, out of sixteen animals there is but one not well known before to naturalists, and that is wrongly classified by him as *Cynogale velox*, being certainly a ghurine animal, and not like any ferine genus. Dr. Gray gives it as his opinion, supported by that of travellers in the country of the Gaboon (as Dr. Daniel, Mr. Fraser, Mr. Waterton), that there is not the slightest evidence in M. du Chaillu's zoological collection to show that he ever went more than a few miles from the coast. The new traveller's veracity rests very much upon his account of his fight with the great Gorilla,—the trophy now stuffed, and in the British Museum. He has written, and since said when questioned at the British Association, that he killed this animal by a shot from a single bullet in the chest, his man firing iron slugs, and hitting him in the neck. Now several military surgeons acquainted with bullet-wounds have pronounced the three broken ribs of the skeleton shown of this particular Gorilla as impossible by a bullet shot from the front. The skin shows no wound on the front of the body; but it does show wounds on the back: so that it flatly contradicts, by its silent testimony, M. du Chaillu's story. M. du Chaillu must be astonished at the extraordinary gullibility of a large section of the English public. Only let a man come "with an introduction," and he might tell us stories about the inhabitants of Jupiter, who walk about with their heads under their arms, all of which certain people would believe because Herschel said it was all right. There is something positively romantic in the change of fortune that awaited M. du Chaillu in England. With his boxes of mouldy bones and skins, hoofless, hornless, earless, dragged about to be rejected at Boston, at New York, at Berlin, at Paris,—his notes left in the hands of some great sensation publisher at New York,—he gets picked up, not by the Zoological Society, but by the Geographical, and finds at last shelter under the ægis of Professor Owen. The Professor had first introduced the Gorilla skull in his paper* to the Zoological Society in November 1851; he naturally felt that no one but himself should introduce the Gorilla, no matter how shabby a specimen. This was all very well; hundreds were glad to see for the first time the creature whose existence they half doubted, and one could not complain that M. du Chaillu got some return in partaking of the celebrity of the rare brute.

* Although Professor Owen will not admit any transmutation, yet he points out certain analogies between the skulls of Papuan Natives and the Gorilla and Orang. The latter animals have no proper fontanelles: the former has the Papuan in three skulls examined by the Professor. Professor Owen gives the following table of mean capacity of skulls:

Caucasian (English)	. . . . .	96 cubic inches.
Malay	. . . . .	86 "
Ethiopian	{ Africa	82 "
	{ Australia	75 "
Gorilla	. . . . .	30 "
Chimpanzee	. . . . .	28 "
Orang	. . . . .	28 "

But we might have been frankly told at the same time by those who knew, that better specimens were to be seen at Paris and Vienna, and that, beyond being a *marchand de Gorilles* in a large way, M. du Chaillu had nothing new to add to the researches of naturalists.

Had the wonderful "Adventures" been merely let off by the Gaboon hero after dinner, as occasion required, and to meet the demand for novelty to which our philosophers are not insensible, they might have passed for what they were worth without Professor Owen standing sponsor for them. But the traveller must write his book, and show pictures of all he saw; it would look so real. Alas for him, the voice of the inferior animal was recognised in spite of the lion's skin; he was found out in his dates, the critics proved an *alibi* for him, and the sportsmen couldn't see how he shot the eagle or the great Gorilla. For a "sensation" public the "Adventures" are just the thing; though we could fancy Messrs. Harper of New York "guessed" they were a trifle too wonderful, or Mr. Murray would not have become the fortunate possessor of the traveller's notes, which, properly dressed, and well introduced, have been received with so much favour. But there is a public who prefer truth to miracles, and it is for their sake that we have taken some trouble to come at a right estimate of M. du Chaillu and the Gorilla.

The Mystery at Fernwood.

IN TWO PARTS. BY THE AUTHOR OF "LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET," &c.

PART I.

"No, Isabel, I do *not* consider that Lady Adela seconded her son's invitation at all warmly."

This was the third time within the last hour that my aunt had made the above remark. We were seated opposite to each other in a first-class carriage of the York express, and the flat fields of ripening wheat were fitting by us like yellow shadows under the afternoon sunshine. We were going on a visit to Fernwood, a country mansion twenty miles from York, in order that I might become acquainted with the family of Mr. Lewis Wendale, to whose only son Laurence I was engaged to be married.

Laurence Wendale and I had only been acquainted during the brief May and June of my first London season, which I—the orphan heiress of a wealthy Calcutta merchant—had passed under the roof of my aunt, Mrs. Maddison Trevor, the dashing widow of a major in the Life Guards, and the only sister of my dead father. Mrs. Trevor had made many objections to this brief six weeks' engagement between Laurence and I; but the impetuous young Yorkshireman had overruled every thing. What objection could there be? he asked. He was to have two thousand a year and Fernwood at his father's death; forty thousand pounds from a maiden aunt the day he came of age,—for he was not yet one-and-twenty, my impetuous young lover. As for his family, let Mrs. Trevor look into Burke's "County Families" for the Wendales of Fernwood. His mother was Lady Adela, youngest daughter of Lord Kingwood, of Castle Kingwood, county Kildare. What objection could my aunt have, then? His family did not know me, and might not approve of the match, urged my aunt. Laurence laughed aloud; a long ringing peal of that merry, musical laughter I loved so well to hear.

"Not approve!" he cried,—"*not* love my little Bella! That is too good a joke!" On which immediately followed an invitation to Fernwood, seconded by a note from Lady Adela Wendale.

It was to this very note that my aunt was never tired of taking objection. It was cold, it was stiff, constrained; it had been only written to please Laurence. How little I thought of the letter! and yet it was the first faint and shadowy indication of that terrible rock ahead upon which my life was to be wrecked; the first feeble link in the chain of the one great mystery in which the fate of so many was involved.

The letter was cold, certainly. Lady Adela started by declaring she should be most happy to see us; she was all anxiety to be introduced to her charming daughter-in-law. And then my lady ran off to tell us how dull Fernwood was, and how she feared we should regret our long

journey into the heart of Yorkshire to a lonely country-house, where we should find no one but a captious invalid, a couple of nervous women, and a young man devoted to farming and field-sports.

But I was not afraid of being dull where my light-hearted Laurence was; and I overruled all my aunt's objections, ordered half a dozen new dresses, and carried Mrs. Maddison Trevor off to the Great Northern Station before she had time to remonstrate.

Laurence had gone on before to see that all was prepared for us; and had promised to meet us at York, and drive us over to Fernwood in his mail-phaeton. He was standing on the platform as the train entered the station, with the sunshine glittering about his chestnut curls, and his clear blue eyes radiant with life and happiness.

Laurence Wendale was very handsome; but perhaps his greatest charm consisted in that wonderful vitality, that untiring energy and indomitable spirit, which made him so different to all other young men whom I had met. So great was this vitality, that, by some magnetic influence, it seemed to communicate itself to others. I was never tired when Laurence was with me. I could waltz longer with him for my partner; ride longer in the Row with him for my cavalier; sit out an opera or examine an exhibition of pictures with less fatigue when he was near. His presence pervaded a whole house; his joyous laugh rang through every room. It seemed as if where he was sorrow could not come.

I felt this more than ever as we drew nearer Fernwood. The country was bleak and bare; wide wastes of moorland stretched away on either side of the by-road down which we drove. The afternoon sunshine had faded out, leaving a cold gray sky, with low masses of leaden clouds brooding close over the landscape, and shutting in the dim horizon. But no influence of scenery or atmosphere could affect Laurence Wendale. His spirits were even higher than usual this afternoon.

"They have fitted up the oak-rooms for you, ladies," he said. "Such solemn and stately chambers, with high canopied beds crowned with funeral plumes; black oak paneling; portraits of dead-and-gone Wendales: Mistress Aurora, with pannier-hoops and a shepherdess's crook; Mistress Lydia, with ringlets à la *Séigné* and a pearl necklace; Mortimer Wendale, in a *Ramilles* wig; Theodore, with love-locks, velvet doublet, and Spanish-leather boots. Such a collection of them! You may expect to see them all descend from their frames in the witching time of night to warm their icy fingers at your sea-coal fires. Your expected arrival has made quite a sensation in our dull old abode. My mother has looked up from the last new novel she had from Mudie half a dozen times this day, I verily believe, to ask if all due preparations were being made; while my dear active, patient, indefatigable sister Lucy has been running about superintending the arrangements ever since breakfast."

"Your sister Lucy," I said, catching at his last words; "I shall so love her, Laurence."

"I hope you will, darling," he answered, almost gravely, "for she has

been the best and dearest sister to me. And yet I'm half afraid; Lucy is ten years older than you—grave, reserved, sometimes almost melancholy; but if ever there was a banished angel treading this earth in human form, my sister Lucy surely is that guardian spirit."

"Is she like you, Laurence?"

"Like me? Oh, no, not in the least. She is only my half-sister, you know. She resembles her mother, who died young."

We were at the gates of Fernwood when he said this,—high wooden gates, with stone pillars moss-grown and dilapidated; a tumble-down looking lodge, kept by a slatternly woman, whose children were at play in a square patch of ground planted with cabbages and currant-bushes, fenced in with a rotten paling, and ambitiously called a garden. From this lodge-entrance a long avenue stretched away for about half a mile, at the end of which a great red-brick mansion, built in the Tudor style, frowned at us, rather as if in defiance than in welcome. The park was entirely uncultivated: the trunks of the trees were choked with the tangled underwood; the fern grew deep in the long vistas, broken here and there by solitary pools of black water, on whose quiet borders we heard the flap of the heron's wing, and the dull croaking of an army of frogs.

Lady Adela was right. Fernwood *was* a dull place. I could scarcely repress a shudder as we drove under the dark avenue; while, as for my poor aunt, her teeth chattered audibly. Accustomed to spend three parts of the year in Onslow Square, and the autumn months at Brighton or Ryde, this dreary Yorkshire mansion was a terrible trial to her rather over-sensitive nerves.

Laurence seemed to divine the reason of our silence. "The place is frightfully neglected, Mrs. Trevor," he said apologetically; "but I do not mean this sort of thing to last, I assure you. Before ever I bring my delicate little Bella to Fernwood, I will have landscape-gardeners and upholsterers down by the score, and try to convert this dreary wilderness into a terrestrial paradise. I cannot tell you why the place has been suffered to fall into decay; certainly not for want of money, still less for want of opportunity, for my father is an idle man, to whom one would imagine restoring and rebuilding would afford a delightful hobby. No, there is no reason why the place should have been so neglected."

He said this more to himself than to us, as if the words were spoken in answer to some long train of thought of his own, and then, growing silent, he seemed to relapse into this old reverie. I watched his face earnestly, for I had seldom seen him look so thoughtful. Presently he said, with more his old manner,

"As you are close upon the threshold of Fernwood now, ladies, I ought perhaps to tell you that you will find ours a most low-spirited family. With every thing in life to make us happy, we seem for ever under a cloud. Ever since I can remember my poor father, he has been dropping slowly into decay, almost in the same way as this neg-

lected place, till now he is a confirmed invalid, without any positive illness. My mother reads novels all day, and half lives upon sal-volatile and spirits of lavender. My sister, the only active person in the house, is always thoughtful, and very often melancholy. Mind, I merely tell you this to prepare you for any thing you may see; not to depress you, for you may depend upon my exertions towards reforming this dreary household, which has sunk into habitual despondency from sheer easy fortune and want of vexation."

The phaeton drew up before a broad flight of stone-steps as Laurence ceased speaking, and in five minutes more he had assisted my aunt and myself to alight, and had ushered us into the presence of Lady Adela and Miss Lucy Wendale.

We found Lady Adela, as her son's description had given us reason to expect, absorbed in a novel. She threw down her book as we entered, and advanced to meet us with considerable cordiality; rather, indeed, as if she really were grateful to us for breaking in upon her solitary life.

"It is so good of you to come," she said, folding me in her slender arms with an almost motherly embrace, "and so kind of you, too, my dear Mrs. Trevor, to abandon all your town pleasures for the sake of bringing this dear girl to me. Believe me, we will do all in our power to make you comfortable, if you can put up with very limited society; for we have received no company whatever since my son's childhood, and I do not think my visiting-list could muster half a dozen names."

Lady Adela was an elegant-looking woman, in the very prime of life; but her handsome face was thin and careworn, and premature wrinkles gathered about her melancholy blue eyes and thoughtful mouth. While she was talking to my aunt, Lucy Wendale and I drew nearer to each other.

Laurence's half-sister was by no means handsome; pale and sallow, with dark hair and rather dull gray eyes, she looked as if some hidden sorrow had quenched out the light of her life long ago, in her earliest youth; some sorrow that had neither been forgotten nor decreased by time, but that had rather grown with her growth, and strengthened with her strength, until it had become a part of her very self,—some disappointed attachment, I thought, some cruel blow that had shattered a girl's first dream, and left a broken-hearted woman to mourn the fatal delusion. In my utter ignorance of life, I thought these were the only griefs which ever left a woman's life desolate.

"You will try and be happy at Fernwood, Isabel," Lucy Wendale said gently, as she drew me into a seat by her side, while Laurence bent fondly over us both. I do not believe, dear as we were to each other, that my Laurence ever loved me as he loved this pale-faced half-sister. "You will try and be happy, will you not, dear Isabel? Laurence has been breaking-in the prettiest chestnut mare in all Yorkshire, I think, that you may explore the country with us. I have heard what a daring horsewoman you are. The pianos have been put in tune for you, and

the billiard-table re-covered that you may have exercise on rainy days ; and if we cannot give you much society, we will do all else to prevent your feeling dull."

"I shall be very happy here with you, dear Lucy," I said ; "but you tell me so much of the dullness of Fernwood, while, I dare say, you yourself have a hundred associations that make the old place very dear to you."

She looked down as I spoke, and a very faint flush broke through the sallow paleness of her complexion.

"I am not very fond of Fernwood," she said gravely.

It was at Fernwood, then, that the great sorrow of her life came upon her, I thought.

"No, Lucy," said Laurence almost impatiently, "every body knows this dull place is killing you by inches, and yet nothing on earth can induce you to quit it. When we all go to Scarborough or Burlington, when mamma goes to Harrogate, when I run up to Town to rub off my provincial rust, and see what the world is made of outside these dreary gates, —you obstinately persist in staying at home ; and the only reason you can urge for doing so is, that you must remain here to take care of that unfortunate invalid of yours, Mr. Thomas."

I was holding Lucy's hand in mine, and I felt the poor wasted little fingers tremble as her brother spoke. My curiosity was strongly aroused.

"Mr. Thomas !" I exclaimed, half involuntarily.

"Ah, to be sure, Bella, I forgot to tell you of that member of our household, but as I have never seen him, I may be forgiven the omission. This Mr. Thomas is a poor relative of my father's : a hopeless invalid, bed-ridden, I believe, —is he not, Lucy ? —who requires a strong man and an experienced nurse to look after him, and who occupies the entire upper story of one wing of the house. Poor Mr. Thomas, invalid as he is, must certainly be a most fascinating person. My mother goes to see him every day, but as stealthily as if she were paying a secret visit to some condemned criminal. I have often met my father coming away from his rooms, pale and melancholy ; and, as for my sister Lucy, she is so attached to this sick dependent of ours, that, as I have just said, nothing will induce her to leave the house, for fear his nurse or his valet should fail in their care of him."

I still held Lucy's hand, but it was perfectly steady now. Could this poor relative, this invalid dependent, have any part in the sorrowful mystery that had overshadowed her life ? And yet, no ; I thought that could scarcely be, for she looked up with such perfect self-possession as she answered her brother,

"My whole life has gradually fallen into the duty of attendance upon this poor young man, Laurence ; and I will never leave Fernwood while he lives."

A young man ! Mr. Thomas was a young man, then.

Lucy herself led my aunt and I to the handsome suite of apartments

prepared for us. Mrs. Trevor's room was separated from mine by a corridor, out of which opened two dressing-rooms and a pretty little boudoir, all looking on to the park. My room was at the extreme angle of the building; it had two doors, one leading to the corridor communicating with my aunt's apartments, the other opening into a gallery running the entire length of the house. Looking out into this gallery, I saw that the opposite wing was shut in by a baize door. I looked with some curiosity at this heavy baize door. It was most likely the barrier which closed the outer world upon Laurence Wendale's invalid relation.

Lucy left us as soon as she had installed my aunt and I in our apartments. While I was dressing for dinner, the housekeeper, a stout, elderly woman, came to ask me if I found every thing I required.

"As you haven't brought your own servant with you, miss," she said, Miss Lucy told me to place her maid Sarah entirely at your service. Miss gives very little work to a maid herself, so Sarah has plenty of leisure time on her hands, and you'll find her a very respectable young woman."

I told her that I could do all I wanted for myself; but before she left me I could not resist asking her one question about the mysterious invalid.

"Are Mr. Thomas's rooms at this end of the house?" I asked.

The woman looked at me with an almost scared expression, and was silent for a moment.

"Has Mr. Laurence been saying any thing to you about Mr. Thomas?" she said; rather anxiously, as I thought.

"Mr. Laurence and his sister Miss Lucy were both talking of him just now."

"Oh, indeed, miss," answered the woman, with an air of relief; "the poor gentleman's rooms are at the other end of the gallery, miss."

"Has he lived here long?" I asked.

"Nigh upon twenty years, miss — above twenty years, I'm thinking."

"I suppose he is distantly related to the family."

"Yes, miss."

"And quite dependent on Mr. Wendale?"

"Yes, miss."

"It is very good of your master to have supported him for so many years, and to keep him in such comfort."

"My master is a very good man, miss."

The woman seemed determined to give me as little information as possible; but I could not resist one more question.

"How is it that in all these years Mr. Laurence has never seen this invalid relation?" I asked.

It seemed that this question, of all others, was the most embarrassing to the housekeeper. She turned first red and then pale, and said, in a very confused manner, "The poor gentleman never leaves his room, miss; and Mr. Laurence has such high spirits, bless his dear heart, and

has such a noisy, rackety way with him, that he's no fit company for an invalid."

It was evidently useless trying for further information, so I abandoned the attempt, and bidding the housekeeper good afternoon, began to dress my hair before the massive oak-framed looking-glass.

"The truth of the matter is," I said to myself, "that after all there is nothing more to be said about it. I have tried to create a mystery out of the simplest possible family arrangement. Mr. Wendale has a bed-ridden relative, too poor and too helpless to support himself. What more natural than that he should give him house-room in this dreary old mansion, where there seems space enough to lodge a regiment?"

I found the family assembled in the drawing-room. Mr. Wendale was the wreck of a very handsome man. He must in early life have resembled Laurence; but, as my lover had said, it seemed indeed as if he and the house and grounds of Fernwood had fallen into decay together. But notwithstanding his weak state of health, he gave us a warm welcome, and did the honours of his hospitable dinner-table with the easy grace of a finished gentleman.

After dinner, my aunt and Lady Adela sat at one of the windows talking; while Laurence, Lucy, and I gathered together upon a long stone terrace outside the drawing-room, watching the last low crimson streak of the August sunset fade out behind the black trunks of the trees, and melt away into faint red splashes upon the water-pools amongst the brushwood. We were very happy together; Laurence and I talking of a hundred different subjects, telling Lucy our London adventures, describing our fashionable friends, our drives and rides, *fêtes*, balls, and dinners; she, with a grave smile upon her lips, listening to us with almost maternal patience.

"I must take you over the old house to-morrow, Isabel," Laurence said, in the course of the evening. "I suppose Lucy did not tell you that she had put you into the haunted room?"

"No, indeed!"

"You must not listen to this silly boy, my dear Isabel," said Miss Wendale. "Of course, like all other old houses, Fernwood can boast its ghost-story; but since no one in my father's lifetime has ever seen the phantom, you may imagine that it is not a very formidable one."

"But you own there is a ghost?" I exclaimed eagerly. "Pray tell me the story."

"I'll tell you, Bella," answered Laurence, "and then you'll know what sort of visitor to expect when the bells of Fernwood church, hidden away behind the elms yonder, tremble on the stroke of midnight. A certain Sir Humphrey Wendale, who lived in the time of Henry the Eighth, was wronged by his wife, a very beautiful woman. Had he acted according to the ordinary fashion of the time, he would have murdered the lady and his rival; but our ancestor was of a more original turn of mind, and he hit upon an original plan of vengeance. He turned

every servant out of Fernwood House; and one morning, when the unhappy lady was sleeping, he locked every door of the mansion, secured every outlet and inlet, and rode away merrily in the summer sunshine, leaving his wife to die the slow and hideous death of starvation. Fernwood is lonely enough even now, Heaven knows! but it was lonelier in those distant days. A passing traveller may now and then have glanced upward at the smokeless chimneys, dimly visible across the trees, as he rode under the park-palings; but none ever dreamed that the deserted mansion had one luckless tenant. Fifteen months afterwards, when Sir Humphrey rode home from foreign travel, he had some difficulty in forcing the door of the chamber in which you are to sleep: the withered and skeleton form of his dead wife had fallen across the threshold."

"What a horrible story!" I exclaimed, with a shiver.

"It is only a legend, dear Isabel," said Lucy; "like all tradition, exaggerated and distorted into due proportions of poetic horror. Pray, do not suffer your mind to dwell upon such a fable."

"Indeed I hope it is not true," I answered. "How fond people are of linking mysteries and horrors such as this with the history of an old family! And yet we never fall across any such family mystery in our own days."

I slept soundly that night at Fernwood, undisturbed by the attenuated shadow of Sybil Wendale, Sir Humphrey's unhappy wife. The bright sunshine was reflected in the oak-panels of my room, and the larks were singing high up in a cloudless blue sky, when I awoke. I found my aunt quite reconciled to her visit.

"Lady Adela is a very agreeable woman," she said; "quiet, perhaps, to a fault, but with that high tone of manner which is always charming. Lucy Wendale seems a dear good girl, though evidently a confirmed old maid. You will find her of inestimable use when you are married, that is to say, if you ever have to manage this great rambling place, which will of course fall to your lot in the event of poor Mr. Wendale's death."

As for myself, I was as happy at Fernwood as the August days were long. Lucy Wendale rode remarkably well. It was the only amusement for which she cared; and she and her horses were on terms of the most devoted attachment. Laurence, his sister, and I were therefore constantly out together, riding amongst the hills about Fernwood, and exploring the country for twenty miles round.

Indoors, Lucy left us very much to ourselves. She was the ruling spirit of the house, and but for her every thing must have fallen utterly to decay. Lady Adela read novels, or made a feeble attempt at amusing my aunt with her conversation. Mr. Wendale kept his room during the fore part of the day; while Laurence and I played, sang, sketched, and rattled the billiard-balls over the green cloth whenever bad weather drove us to indoor amusements.

It was one day that I was sketching the castellated façade of the old mansion, that I noticed one peculiar circumstance connected with the suite

of rooms occupied by the invalid, Mr. Thomas. These rooms were at the extreme left angle of the building, and were lighted by a range of six windows. I was surprised by observing that every one of these windows was of ground glass. I asked Laurence the reason of this.

"Why, I believe the glare of light was too much for Mr. Thomas," he answered; "so my father, who is the kindest creature in Christendom, had the windows made opaque, as you see them now."

"Has the alteration been long made?"

"It was made when I was about six years old; I have rather a vague recollection of the event, and I should not perhaps remember it but for one circumstance. I was riding about down here one morning on my Shetland pony, when my attention was attracted by a child who was looking through one of those windows. I was not near enough to see his face, but I fancy he must have been about my own age. He beckoned to me, and I was riding across the grass to respond to his invitation, when my sister Lucy appeared at the window and snatched the child away. I suppose he was some one belonging to the female attendant upon Mr. Thomas, and had strayed unnoticed into the invalid's rooms. I never saw him again; and the next day a glazier came over from York, and made the alteration in the windows."

"But Mr. Thomas must have air; I suppose the windows are sometimes opened," I said.

"Never; they are each ventilated by a single pane, which, if you observe, is open now."

"I cannot help pitying this poor man," I said, after a pause, "shut out almost from the light of heaven by his infirmities, deprived of all society."

"Not entirely so," answered Laurence. "No one knows how many stolen hours my sister Lucy devotes to her poor invalid."

"Perhaps he is a very studious man, and finds his consolation in literary or scientific pursuits," I said; "does he read very much?"

"I think not. I never heard of his having any books got for him."

"But one thing has puzzled me, Laurence," I continued. "Lucy spoke of him the other day as a young man, and yet Mrs Porson, your house-keeper, told me he had lived at Fernwood for upwards of twenty years."

"As for that," answered Laurence carelessly, "Lucy no doubt remembers him as a young man upon his first arrival here, and continues to call him so from mere force of habit. But, pray, my little inquisitive Bella, do not rack your brains about this poor relation of ours. To tell the truth, I have become so used to his unseen presence in the house, that I have ceased to think of him at all. I meet a grim woman, dressed in black merino, coming out of the green-baize door, and I know that she is Mr. Thomas's nurse; or I see a solemn-faced man, and I am equally assured that he is Mr. Thomas's servant, James Beck, who has grown gray in his office; I encounter the doctor riding away from Fernwood on

his brown cob, and I feel convinced that he has just looked in to see how Mr. Thomas is going on; if I miss my sister for an hour in the twilight, I know that she is in the west wing talking to Mr. Thomas; but as nobody ever calls upon me to do any thing for the poor man, I think no more of the matter."

I felt these words almost a reproof to what might have appeared idle, or even impertinent, curiosity on my part. And yet the careless indifference of Laurence's manner seemed to jar upon my senses. Could it be that this glad and high-hearted being, whom I so tenderly loved, was selfish—heedless of the sufferings of others? No, it was surely not this that prompted his thoughtless words. It is a positive impossibility for one whose whole nature is life and motion, animation and vigour, to comprehend for one brief moment the terrors of the invalid's darkened rooms and solitary days.

I had been nearly a month at Fernwood, when, for the first time during our visit, Laurence left us. One of his old school-fellows, a lieutenant in the army, was quartered with his regiment at York, and Laurence had promised to dine at the mess. Though I had been most earnest in requesting him to accept this invitation, I could not help feeling dull and dispirited as I watched him drive away down the avenue, and felt that for the first time we were to spend the long autumn evening without him. Do what I would, the time hung heavily on my hands. The September sunset was beautiful, and Lucy and I walked up and down the terrace after dinner, while Mr. Wendale slept in his easy-chair, and my aunt and Lady Adela exchanged drowsy monosyllabic sentences on a couch near the fire, which was always lighted in the evening.

It was in vain that I tried to listen to Lucy's conversation. My thoughts wandered in spite of myself,—sometimes to Laurence in the brilliantly-lighted mess-room, enlivening a cluster of *blasé* officers with his boisterous gaiety; sometimes, as if in contrast to this, to the dark west rooms in which the invalid counted the long hours; sometimes to that dim future in whose shadowy years death was to claim our weary host, and Laurence and I were to be master and mistress at Fernwood. I had often tried to picture the place as it would be when it fell into Laurence's hands, and architects and landscape-gardeners came to work their wondrous transformations; but, do what I would, I could never imagine it otherwise than as it was,—with straggling ivy hanging forlornly about the moss-stained walls, and solitary pools of stagnant water hiding amongst the tangled brushwood.

Laurence and I were to be married in the following spring. He would come of age in February, and I should be twenty in March,—scarcely a year between our ages, and both a great deal too young to marry, my aunt said. After tea Lucy and I sang and played. Dreary music it seemed to me that night. I thought my voice and the piano were both out of tune, and I left Lucy very rudely in the middle of our favourite duet. I took up twenty books from the crowded drawing-room

table, only to throw them wearily down again. Never had Lady Adela's novels seemed so stupid as when I looked into them that night; never had my aunt's conversation sounded so tiresome. I looked from my watch to the old-fashioned time-piece upon the chimney half a dozen times, to find at last that it was scarcely ten o'clock. Laurence had promised to be home by eleven, and had begged Lucy and I to sit up for him.

Eleven struck at last; but Laurence had not kept his promise. My aunt and Lady Adela rose to light their candles. Mr. Wendale always retired a little after nine. I pleaded for half an hour longer, and Lucy was too kind not to comply readily.

"Isabel is right," she said; "Laurence is a spoilt boy, you know, mamma, and will feel himself very much ill-used if he finds no one up to hear his description of the mess-dinner."

"Only half an hour, then, mind, young ladies," said my aunt. "I cannot allow you to spoil your complexions on account of dissipated people who drive twenty miles to a military dinner. One half-hour; not a moment more, or I shall come down again to scold you both."

We promised obedience, and my aunt left us. Lucy and I seated ourselves on each side of the low fire, which had burned dull and hollow. I was much too dispirited to talk, and I sat listening to the ticking of the clock, and the occasional falling of a cinder in the bright steel fender. Then that thought came to me which comes to all watchers. What if any thing had happened to Laurence? I went to one of the windows, and pulled back the heavy wooden shutters. It was a lovely night; clear, though not moonlight, and a myriad stars gleamed in the cloudless sky. I stood at the window for some time, listening for the wheels, and watching for the lights of the phaeton.

I too was a spoilt child; life had for me been bright and smooth, and the least thought of grief or danger to those I loved filled me with a wild panic. I turned suddenly round to Lucy, and cried out, "Lucy! Lucy, I am getting frightened. Suppose any thing should have happened to Laurence. Those horses are wild and unmanageable sometimes. If he had taken a few glasses of wine,—if he trusted the groom to drive—if—"

She came over to me, and took me in her arms as if I had been indeed a little child.

"My darling," she said, "my darling Isabel, you must not distress yourself by such fancies as these. He is only half an hour later than he said, and as for danger, dearest, he is beneath the shelter of Providence, without whose safeguard those we love are never secure even for a moment."

Her quiet manner calmed my agitation. I left the window, and returned shivering to the expiring fire.

"It is nearly three-quarters of an hour now, Bella, dear," she said presently; "we must keep our promise, and as for Laurence, you will hear the phaeton drive in before you go to sleep, I dare say."

"I shall not go to sleep until I do hear it," I answered, as I bade her good night.

I could not help listening for the welcome sound of the carriage-wheels as I crossed the hall and went up-stairs. I stopped in the corridor to look into my aunt's room; but she was fast asleep, and I closed the door as softly as I had opened it. It was as I left this room that, glancing down the corridor, I was surprised to see that there was a light in my own bed-chamber. I was prepared to find a fire there, but the light shining through the half-open door was something brighter than the red glow of a fire. I had joined Laurence in laughing at the ghost-story, but my first thought on seeing this light was of the shadow of the wretched Lady Sybil. What if I found her crouching over my hearth?

I had half a mind to go back to my aunt's room, awake her, and tell her my fears; but one moment's reflection made me ashamed of my cowardice. I went on, and pushed open the door of my room. There was no pale phantom shivering over the open hearth. There was an old-fashioned silver candlestick upon the table, and Laurence, my lover, was seated by the blazing fire; not dressed in the evening costume he had worn for the dinner-party, but wrapped in a loose gray woollen dressing gown, and wearing a black-velvet smoking-cap upon his chestnut hair.

Without stopping to think of the strangeness of his appearance in my room; without wondering at the fact of his having entered the house unknown to either Lucy or myself; without one thought but joy and relief of mind in seeing him once more,—I ran forward to him, crying out, "Laurence, Laurence, I am so glad you have come back!"

He—Laurence, my lover, as I thought, the man, the horrible shadow, the dreadful being—rose from his chair, and snatching up some papers that lay loosely on the table by his side, crumpled them into a ball with one fierce gesture of his strong hand, and flung them at my feet; then, with a harsh dissonant laugh that seemed a mocking echo of the joyous music I loved so well, he stalked out of the door opening on the gallery. I tried to scream, but my dry lips and throat could form no sound. The oak-paneling of the room spun round, the walls and ceiling contracted, as if they had been crushing in upon me to destroy me. I fell heavily to the floor; but as I fell I heard the platoon-wheels upon the carriage-drive below, and Laurence Wendale's voice calling to the servants.

The Mystery at Fernwood.

IN TWO PARTS. BY THE AUTHOR OF "LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET," &c.

PART II.

I CAN remember little more that happened upon that horrible night. I have a vague recollection of opening my eyes upon a million dazzling lights, which slowly resolved themselves into the one candle held in Lucy Wendale's hand, as she stood beside the bed upon which I was lying. My aunt, wrapped in her dressing-gown, sat by my pillow. My face and hair were dripping with the vinegar-and-water they had thrown over me, and I could hear Laurence, in the corridor outside my bed-room door, asking again and again, "Is she better? Has she quite come to?"

But of all this I was only dimly conscious; a load of iron seemed pressing upon my forehead, and icy hands seemed riveted upon the back of my head, holding it tightly to the pillow on which it lay. I could no more have lifted it than I could have lifted a ton-weight. I could only lie staring with stupid dull eyes at Lucy's pale face, silently wishing that she and my aunt would go, and leave me to myself.

I suppose I was feverish and a little light-headed all that night—acting over and over again the brief scene of my meeting with the weird shadow of my lover. All the stories I had laughed at might be true, then. I had seen the phantom of the man I loved! The horrible double, shaped perhaps out of impalpable air, but as terribly distinct to the eye as if it had been a form of flesh and blood.

Lucy was sitting by my bed-side when I awoke from a short sleep which had succeeded the long night of fever. How intensely refreshing that brief but deep slumber was to me! How delicious the gradual fading-out of the sense of horror and bewilderment, with all the hideous confusions of delirium, into the blank tranquillity of dreamless sleep! When I awoke, my head was still painful, and my frame as feeble as if I had lain for a week on a sick bed; but my brain was cleared, and I was able to think quietly of what had happened.

"Lucy," I said, "you do not know what frightened me, or why I fainted."

"No, dearest, not exactly."

"But you can know nothing of it, Lucy. You were not with me when I came into this room last night. You did not see—"

I paused, unable to finish my sentence.

"Did not see whom—or what, dear Isabel?"

"The shadow of your brother Laurence."

My whole frame trembled with the recollection of my terror of the night before, as I said this; yet I was able to observe Lucy's face, and I saw that its natural hue had faded to an ashen pallor.

"The shadow, Isabel!" she faltered, not as if in any surprise at my

words, but rather as if she merely spoke because she felt obliged to make some reply to me.

"Yes, Lucy," I said, raising myself upon the pillow, and grasping her wrist, "the shadow of your brother Laurence. The living, breathing, moving image of your brother, with every lineament and every shade of colouring reflected in the phantom face as they would be reflected in a mirror. Not shadowy, transparent, or vanishing, but as palpable as you are to me at this very moment. Good heavens! Lucy, I give you my solemn word that I heard the phantom footsteps along that gallery as distinctly as I have ever heard the steps of Laurence himself; the firm heavy tread of a strong man."

Lucy Wendale sat for some time perfectly silent, looking straight before her,—not at me, but out at the half-open window, round which the ivy-leaves were fluttering, to the dim moor-land melting into purple distance across the tree-tops in the park. Her profile was turned towards me; but I could see by her firmly compressed lips and fixed eyes that she was thinking deeply.

Presently she said, slowly and deliberately, without once looking at me as she spoke, "You must be fully aware, my dearest Isabel, that these delusions are of common occurrence with people of an extremely sensitive temperament. You may be one of these delicately organised persons; you had thrown yourself last night into a very nervous and hysterical state in your anxiety about Laurence. With your whole mind full of his image, with all kinds of shadowy terrors about danger to him, what more likely than that you should conjure up an object such as that which you fancy you saw last night?"

"But so palpable, Lucy, so distinct!"

"It would be as easy for the brain to shape a distinct as an indistinct form. Grant the possibility of optical delusion,—a fact established by a host of witnesses,—and you cannot limit the character of the delusion. But I must get our doctor, Mr. Arden, to talk to you about this. He is something of a metaphysician as well as a medical man, and will be able to cure your mental ills, and regulate this feverish pulse of yours at the same time. Laurence has ridden over to York to fetch him, and I dare say they will both be here directly."

"Lucy, remember, you must never tell Laurence the cause of my last night's fainting-fit."

"Never, Isabel. I was about to make the very same request to you. It is much better that he should never know it."

"Much better; for, oh, Lucy, do you remember that in all ghost-stories the appearance of the shadow, or double, of a living person is a presage of death to that person? The thought of this brings back all my terror. My Laurence, my darling, if any thing should happen to him!"

"Come, Bella, Mr. Arden must talk to you. In the mean time, here comes Mrs. Porson with your breakfast. While you are taking it, I

will go to the library, and look for Sir Walter Scott's *Demonology*. You will find several instances in that book of the optical delusions I have spoken of."

The housekeeper came bustling into the room with a breakfast-tray, which she placed on a table by the bed. When she had arranged every thing for my comfort, and propped me up with a luxuriant pile of pillows, she turned round to speak to Lucy Wendale.

"Oh, Miss Lucy," she said, "poor James Beck is so awfully cut up. If you'd only just see him, and tell him—"

Lucy silenced her with one look; a brief but all-expressive glance of warning and reproof. I could not help wondering what possible reason there could be for making a mystery of some little trouble of James Beck's.

Mr. Arden, the York surgeon, was the most delightful of men. He came with Lucy into my room, and laughed and chatted me out of my low spirits before he had been with me a quarter of an hour. He talked so much of hysteria, optical delusions, false impressions of outward objects, disordered and abnormal states of the organ of sight, and other semi-mental, semi-physical infirmities, that he fairly bewildered me into agreeing with and believing all he said.

"I hear you are a most accomplished horsewoman, Miss Morley," he said, as he rose to leave us; "and as the day promises to be fine, I most strongly recommend a canter across the moors, with Mr. Wendale as your cavalier. Go to sleep between this and luncheon; rise in time to eat a mutton-chop and drink a glass of bitter ale; ride for two hours in the sunniest part of the afternoon, take a light dinner, and go to bed early; and I will answer for your seeing no more of the ghost. You have no idea how much indigestion has to do with these things. I dare say if I were to see your bill of fare for yesterday, I should discover that the phantom made his first appearance among the *entrées*. Who can wonder that the Germans are a ghost-seeing people, when it is remembered that they eat raspberry-jam with roast veal?"

I followed the doctor's advice to the letter; and at three o'clock in the afternoon Laurence and I were galloping across the moorland, tinged with a yellow hazy light in the September sunshine. Like most impressionable people, I soon recovered from my nervous shock; and by the time I sprang from the saddle before the wide stone portico at Fernwood I had almost forgotten my terrors of the night before.

A fortnight after this my aunt and I left Yorkshire for Brighton, whither Laurence speedily followed us. Before leaving I did all in my power to induce Lucy to accompany us, but in vain. She thanked my aunt and I for our invitation, but declared that she could not leave Fernwood. We departed, therefore, without having won her, as I had hoped to have done, from the monotony of her solitary life, and without having seen Mr. Wendale's invalid dependent, the mysterious occupant of the west wing.

Early in November Laurence was summoned from Brighton by the arrival of a black-bordered letter, written by Lucy, and telling him of his father's death. Mr. Wendale had been found by his servant, seated in an easy-chair in his study, with his head lying back upon the cushions, and an open book on the carpet at his feet, dead. He had long suffered from disease of the heart.

My lover wrote me long letters from Yorkshire, telling me how his mother and sister bore the blow which had fallen upon them so suddenly. It was a quiet and subdued sorrow, rather than any tempestuous grief, which reigned in the narrow circle at Fernwood. Mr. Wendale had been an invalid for many years, giving very little of his society to his wife and daughter. His death, therefore, though sudden, had not been unexpected, nor did his loss leave any great blank in that quiet home. Laurence spent Christmas at Fernwood, but returned to us for the new year; and it was then settled that we should go down to Yorkshire early in February, in order to superintend the restoration and alteration of the old place.

All was arranged for our journey, when, on the very day on which we were to start, Laurence came to Onslow Square with a letter from his mother, which he had only just received. Lady Adela wrote a few hurried lines to beg us to delay our visit for some days, as they had decided on removing Mr. Thomas, before the alterations were commenced, to a cottage which was being prepared for him near York. The invalid had not been left a pauper by the death of his patron, as by Mr. Wendale's will an annuity of two hundred a year was left to Thomas Wendale.

"I will not hear of the visit being delayed an hour," Laurence said impatiently, as he thrust Lady Adela's crumpled letter into his pocket. "My poor foolish mother and sister are really too absurd about this first or fifth cousin of ours, Thomas Wendale. Let him leave Fernwood or let him stay at Fernwood, just as he, or his nurse, or his medical man, may please; but I certainly shall not allow his arrangements to interfere with ours. So, ladies, I shall be perfectly ready to escort you by the eleven o'clock express."

Mrs. Trevor remonstrated, declaring that she would rather delay our visit according to Lady Adela's wish; but my impetuous Laurence would not hear a word, and under a black and moonless February sky we drove up the avenue at Fernwood.

We met Mr. Arden in the hall as we entered: there seemed something ominous in receiving our first greeting from the family doctor, and Laurence was for a moment alarmed by his presence.

"My mother? Lucy?" he said anxiously; "they are well, I hope?"

"Perfectly well; I have not been attending them. I have just come from Mr. Thomas."

"Is he worse?"

"I fear he is rather worse than usual."

Our welcome was scarcely a cordial one, for both Lucy and Lady

Adela were evidently embarrassed by our unexpected arrival. Their black dresses, half covered with crape, the mourning liveries of the servants, the vacant seat of the master, the dismal winter weather and ceaseless beating of the rain upon the window-panes without, gave a more than usually dreary aspect to the place, and seemed to chill us to the very soul.

Those who at any period of their lives have suffered some terrible and crushing affliction, some never-to-be-forgotten trouble, for which even the hand of Time has no lessening influence, which increases rather than diminishes as the slow course of a hopeless life carries us further from it, so that as we look back we do not ask ourselves why the trial seemed so bitter, but wonder rather how we endured even as we did,—those only who have sunk under such a grief as this can know how difficult it is to dissociate the period preceding the anguish from the hour in which it came. I say this lest I should be influenced by after-feelings when I describe the dismal shadows that seemed to brood over the hearth round which Lady Adela, my aunt, Laurence, and myself, gathered upon the night of our return to Fernwood.

Lucy had left us; and when her brother inquired about her, Lady Adela said that she was with Mr. Thomas.

As usual, Laurence chafed at the answer. It was hard, he said, that his sister should have to act as sick-nurse to this man.

"James Beck has gone to York to prepare for Mr. Thomas," answered Lady Adela, "and the poor boy has no one with him but his nurse."

The poor boy! I wondered why it was that Lady Adela and her step-daughter always alluded to Mr. Thomas as a young man.

Early the next morning, Laurence insisted upon my aunt and I accompanying him on a circuit of the house, to discuss the intended alterations. I have already described the gallery, running the whole length of the building, at one end of which was situated the suite of rooms occupied by Mr. Thomas, and at the other extremity those devoted to Mrs. Trevor and myself. Lady Adela's apartments were nearest to those of the invalid, Lucy's next, then the billiard-room, and opening out of that the bed and dressing room occupied by Laurence. On the other side of the gallery were servants' and visitors' rooms, and a pretty boudoir sacred to Lady Adela.

Laurence was in very high spirits, planning alterations here and renovations there,—bay-windows to be thrown out in one direction, and folding doors knocked through in another,—till we laughed heartily at him on finding that the pencil memorandum he was preparing for the architect resolved itself into an order for knocking down the old house and building a new one. We had explored every nook and corner in the place, with the one exception of those mysterious apartments in the left wing. Laurence paused before the green-baize door, but after a moment's hesitation tapped for admittance.

"I have never seen Mr. Thomas, and it is rather awkward to have to

ask to look at his rooms while he is in them; but the necessity of the case will be my excuse for intruding on him. The architect will be here to-morrow, and I want to have all my plans ready to submit to him."

The baize door was opened by Lucy Wendale; she started at seeing us.

"What do you want, Laurence?" she said.

"To see Mr. Thomas's rooms. I shall not disturb him, if he will kindly allow me to glance round the apartments."

I could see that there was an inner half-glass door behind that at which Lucy was standing.

"You cannot possibly see the rooms to-day, Laurence," she said hurriedly. "Mr. Thomas leaves early to-morrow morning."

She came out into the gallery, closing the baize door behind her; but as the shutting of the door reverberated through the gallery, I heard another sound that turned my blood to ice, and made me cling convulsively to Laurence's arm.

The laugh, the same dissonant laugh that I had heard from the spectral lips of my lover's shadow!

"Lucy," I said, "did you hear that?"

"What?"

"The laugh, the laugh I heard the night that—"

Laurence had thrown his arm round me, alarmed at my terror. His sister was standing a little way behind him; she put her finger to her lips, looking at me significantly.

"You must be mistaken, Isabel," she said quietly.

There was some mystery, then, connected with this Mr. Thomas,—a mystery which for some especial reason was to be concealed from Laurence.

Half an hour after this, Lucy Wendale came to me as I was searching for a book in the library.

"Isabel," she said, "I wish to say a few words to you."

"Yes, dear Lucy."

"You are to be my sister, and I have perhaps done wrong in concealing from you the one unhappy secret which has clouded the lives of my poor father, my step-mother, and myself. But long ago, when Laurence was a child, it was deemed expedient that the grief which was so heavy a load for us should, if possible, be spared to him. My father was so passionately devoted to his handsome light-hearted boy, that he shrank day by day from the thought of revealing to him the afflicting secret which was such a source of grief to himself. We found that, by constant care and watchfulness, it was possible to conceal all from Laurence, and up to this hour we have done so. But it is perhaps better that you should know all; for you will be able to aid us in keeping the knowledge from Laurence, or, if absolutely necessary, you may by and by break it to him gently, and reconcile him to an irremediable affliction."

"But this secret—this affliction—it concerns your invalid relation, Mr. Thomas?"

"It does, Isabel."

I know that the words which were to reveal all were trembling upon her lips,—that in one brief moment she would have spoken, and I should have known all. I should have known in time—but before she could utter a syllable, the door was opened by one of the women-servants.

"Oh, miss, if you please," she said, "Mrs. Peters says would you step up-stairs this minute?"

Mrs. Peters was the nurse who attended on Mr. Thomas.

Lucy pressed my hand. "To-morrow, dearest, to-morrow I will tell you all."

She hurried from the room, and I sank into a chair by the fire, with my book lying open in my lap, unable to read a line, unable to think, except upon one subject,—the secret which I was so soon to learn. If she had but spoken then! A few words more, and what unutterable misery might have been averted!

I was aroused from my reverie by Laurence, who came to challenge me to a game at billiards. On my pleading fatigue as an excuse for refusing, he seated himself on a low stool at my feet, offering to read aloud to me.

"What shall it be, Bella? *Paradise Lost*, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, Byron, Shelley, Tennyson—?"

"Tennyson by all means! The dreary rain-blotted sky outside those windows, and the bleak moorland distances, are perfectly Tennysonian. Read *Locksley Hall*."

His deep melodious voice rolled out the ponderous and swelling verse; but I heard the sound without its meaning. I could only think of the mystery which had been kept so long a secret from my unconscious lover. When he had finished the poem, he threw aside his book, and sat looking earnestly at me.

"My solemn Bella," he said, "what on earth are you thinking of?"

The broad glare of the blaze from a tremendous sea-coal fire was full upon his handsome face. I tried to rouse myself, and, laying my hands upon his forehead, pushed back his curling chestnut hair. As I did so, I for the first time perceived a cicatrice across his left temple. A deep gash, as if from the cut of a knife; but a wound of far-distant date.

"Why, Laurence," I said, "you tell me you were never thrown, and yet you have a scar here that looks like the evidence of some desperate fall. Did you get it in hunting?"

"No, my inquisitive Bella! No horse is to blame for that personal embellishment. I believe it was done when I was a child of two or three years old; but I have no positive recollection of it, though I have a vague remembrance of wearing a sticking-plaster bandage across my forehead."

"But it looks like a scar from a cut—from the cut of a knife."

"I must have fallen upon some sharp instrument—the edge of one of the stone steps, perhaps, or a metal scraper."

"My poor Laurence, the blow might have killed you!"

He looked grave.

"Do you know, Bella," he said, "how difficult it is to dissociate the vague recollections of the actual events of our childhood from childish dreams that are scarcely more vague? Sometimes I have a strange fancy that I can remember getting this cut, and that it was caused by a knife thrown at me by another child."

"Another child! what child?"

"A boy of my own age and size."

"Was he your playfellow?"

"I can't tell; I can remember nothing but the circumstance of his throwing the knife at me, and the sensation of the hot blood streaming into my eyes and blinding me."

"Can you remember where it occurred?"

"Yes; in the gallery upstairs."

We lunched at two. After luncheon, Laurence went to his own room to write some letters; Lady Adela and my aunt read and worked in the drawing-room, while I sat at the piano, rambling through some sonatas of Beethoven.

We were occupied in this manner when Lucy came into the room, dressed for walking. "I have ordered the carriage, mamma," she said. "I am going over to York to see that Beck has every thing prepared. I shall be back to dinner."

Lady Adela seemed to grow more helpless every day; every day to rely more and more on her step-daughter.

"You are sure to do all for the best, Lucy," she said. "Take plenty of wraps, for it is bitterly cold."

"Shall I go with you, Lucy?" I asked.

"You! Oh, on no account, dear Isabel. What would Laurence say to me if I carried you off for a whole afternoon?"

She hurried from the room, and in two minutes the lumbering close carriage drove away from the portico. My motive in asking to accompany her was a selfish one. I thought it possible she might resume the morning's interrupted conversation during our drive.

If I had but gone with her!

It is so difficult to reconcile oneself to the irrevocable decrees of Providence; it is so difficult to bow the head in meek submission to the awful fiat; so difficult not to look back to the careless hours which preceded the falling of the blow, and calculate how it might have been averted.

The black February twilight was closing in. My aunt and Lady Adela had fallen asleep by the fire. I stole softly out of the room to fetch a book which I had left up-stairs. There was more light in the hall and on the staircase than in the drawing-room; but the long gallery was growing dark, the dusky shadows gathering about the faded portraits of my lover's ancestry. I stopped at the top of the staircase, and looked for a moment towards the billiard-room. The door was open,

and I could see a light streaming from Laurence's little study. I went to my own room, contrived to find the book I wanted, and returned to the gallery. As I left my room, I saw that the green-baize door at the extreme end of the gallery was wide open.

An irresistible curiosity attracted me towards those mysterious apartments. As I drew nearer to the staircase, I could plainly perceive the figure of a man standing at the half-glass door within. The light of a fire shining in the room behind him threw the outline of his head and figure into sharp relief. There was no possibility of mistaking that well-known form—the broad shoulders, the massive head, and clusters of curling hair. It was Laurence Wendale looking through the glass door of the invalid's apartments. He had penetrated those forbidden chambers, then. I thought immediately of the mystery connected with the invalid, and of Lucy's anxiety that it should be kept from her brother, and I hurried forward towards the baize door. As I advanced he saw me, and rattled impatiently at the lock of the inner door. It was locked; but the key was on the outside. He did not speak, but rattled the lock incessantly, signifying by a gesture of his head that I was to open the door. I turned the key, the door opened outwards, and I was nearly knocked down by the force with which he flung it back and dashed past me.

"Laurence!" I said, "Laurence! what have you been doing here, and who locked you in?"

He did not answer me, but strode along the gallery, looking at each of the doors till he came to the only open one, that of the billiard-room, which he entered.

I was wounded by his rude manner; but I scarcely thought of that, for I was on the threshold of the apartments occupied by the mysterious invalid, and I could not resist one hurried peep into the room behind the half-glass door.

It was a roomy apartment, very plainly furnished; a large fire burned in the grate, which was closely guarded by a very high brass fender, the highest I had ever seen. There was an easy-chair close to this fender, and on the floor beside it a heap of old childish books, with glaring coloured prints, some of them torn to shreds. On the mantelpiece there was a painted wooden figure held together by strings, such as children play with. Exactly opposite to where I stood there was another door, which was half open, and through which I saw a bed-room, furnished with two iron bedsteads, placed side by side. There were no hangings either to these bedsteads or to the windows in the sitting-room; and the latter were protected by iron bars. A horrible fear came over me. Mr. Thomas was perhaps a madman. The seclusion, the locked doors, the guarded fireplace and windows, the dreary curtainless beds, the watchfulness of Lucy, James Beck, and the nurse—all pointed to this conclusion.

Tenantless as the rooms looked, the maniac might be lurking in the

shadow. I turned to hurry back to the gallery, and found myself face to face with Mrs. Peters, the nurse, with a small tea-tray in her hands.

"My word, miss," she said, "how you did startle me, to be sure! What are you doing here? and why have you unlocked this door?"

"To let out Mr. Laurence."

"Mr. Laurence!" she exclaimed, in a terrified voice.

"Yes; he was inside this door. Some one had locked him in, I suppose; and he told me to open it for him."

"Oh, miss, what have you done! what have you done! To-day, above all things, when we've had such an awful time with him! What have you done!"

What had I done? I thought the woman must be mad herself by the agitation of her manner.

Oh, merciful Heaven, the laugh!—the harsh, mocking, exulting, idiotic laugh! This time it rang in loud and discordant peals to the very rafters of the old house.

"Oh, for pity's sake," I cried, clinging to the nurse, "what is it, what is it?"

She threw me off, and, rushing to the balustrades at the head of the staircase, called loudly, "Andrew, Henry! bring lights."

They came, the two men-servants,—old men, who had served in that house for thirty or forty years,—they came with candles, and followed the nurse to the billiard-room.

The door of communication between that and Laurence Wendale's study was wide open, and on the threshold, with the light shining upon him from within the room, stood the double of my lover; the living, breathing image of my Laurence, the creature I had seen at the half-glass door, and had mistaken for Laurence himself. His face was distorted by a ghastly grin, and he was uttering some strange unintelligible sounds as we approached him,—guttural and unearthly murmurs horrible to hear. Even in that moment of bewilderment and terror I could see that the cambric about his right wrist was splashed with blood.

The nurse looked at him severely; he slunk away like a frightened child, and crept into a corner of the billiard-room, where he stood grinning and mouthing at the blood-stains upon his wrist.

We rushed into the little study. Oh, horror of horrors! the writing-table was overturned; ink, papers, pens, all scattered and trampled on the floor; and in the midst of the confusion lay Laurence Wendale, the blood slowly ebbing away, with a dull gurgling sound, from a hideous gash in his throat.

A pen-knife, with which he had been, it is imagined, mending pens when disturbed by his horrible visitor, lay amongst the trampled papers, crimsoned to the hilt.

Laurence Wendale had been murdered by his idiot twin-brother.

* * * * *

There was an inquest. I can recall at any hour, or at any moment,

the whole agony of the scene. The dreary room, adjoining that in which the body lay; the dull February sky; the monotonous voice of the coroner, and the medical men; and myself, or some wretched, shuddering, white-lipped creature that I could scarcely believe to be myself, giving evidence. Lady Adela was reproved for having kept her idiot son at Fernwood without the knowledge of the murdered man; but every effort was made to hush up the terrible story. Thomas Wendale was tried at York, and transferred to the county lunatic asylum, there to be detained during her Majesty's pleasure. His unhappy brother was quietly buried in the Wendale vault, the chief mausoleum in a damp moss-grown church close to the gates of Fernwood.

It is upwards of ten years since all this happened; but the horror of that February twilight is as fresh in my mind to-day as it was when I lay stricken—not senseless, but stupefied with anguish—on a sofa in the drawing-room at Fernwood, listening to the wailing of the wretched mother and sister.

The misery of that time changed me at once from a young woman to an old one; not by any sudden blanching of my dark hair, but by the blotting-out of every girlish feeling in the dull monotony of resignation. This change in my own nature has drawn Lucy Wendale and I together with a link far stronger than any common sisterhood. Lady Adela died two years after the murder of her son. The Fernwood property (forfeited by the idiot's crime, but afterwards restored by the clemency of the crown) has passed into the hands of the heir-at-law.

Lucy lives with me at the Isle of Wight. She is my protectress, my elder sister, without whom I should be lost, for I am but a poor helpless creature.

It was months after the quiet funeral in Fernwood Church before Lucy spoke to me of the wretched being who had been the author of so much misery.

"The idiocy of my unhappy brother," she said, "was caused by a fall from his nurse's arms, which resulted in a fatal injury to the brain. The two children were infants at the time of the accident, and so much alike that we could only distinguish Laurence from Thomas by the different colour of the ribbons with which the nurse tied the sleeves of the children's little white frocks. My poor father suffered bitterly from his son's affliction; sometimes cherishing hope even in the face of the verdict which medical science pronounced upon the poor child's case, sometimes succumbing to utter despair. It was the intense misery which he himself endured that made him resolve on the course which ultimately led to so fatal a catastrophe. He determined on concealing Thomas's affliction from his twin-brother. At a very early age the idiot child was removed to the apartments in which he lived until the day of his brother's murder. James Beck and the nurse, both experienced in the treatment of mental affliction, were engaged to attend him; and, indeed, the strictest precaution seemed necessary, as, on the only occasion of the two children meet-

ing, Thomas evinced a determined animosity to his brother, and inflicted a blow with a knife, the traces of which Laurence carried to his grave. The doctors attributed this violent hatred to some morbid feeling respecting the likeness between the two boys. Thomas flew at his brother as some wild animal springs upon its reflection in a glass. With me, in his most violent moments, he was comparatively tractable; but the strictest surveillance was always necessary, and the fatal deed which the wretched, but irresponsible, creature at last committed might never have been done but for the imprudent absence of James Beck and myself."

The Autobiography of an Evil Spirit.

THE existence of incorporeal beings to which the epithet of 'evil' may be applied with more or less propriety, seems almost a necessary corollary from the admission of the immortality of the spirit itself. The proposition that such beings may exercise an influence upon human affairs requires, indeed, such an admission as an indispensable postulate, but is by no means a logical deduction from it. It may be received upon external authority, such as the interpretation usually given to certain well-known passages in the Gospels; or as an inference from mental experiences, such as that of the existence—which several minds of a high order profess themselves to have suspected—of a psychical agency distinctly distinguishable from any that could be referred to their own personality, and operating in a manner most distressing and repugnant to the latter.* Neither of these arguments admit of demonstration, the interpretation being contested and uncertain, and the experience only evidence for those to whom it has been vouchsafed. If we would ascertain the truth of the matter with certainty, we must appeal, as in most other inquiries, to the evidence of external facts. Of such, carelessly and insufficiently observed and recorded, there is a very great abundance; duly authenticated, a most significant penury, if, indeed, any such exist. Undoubtedly the belief in demoniacal possession is a natural growth of the human mind, encountered in every country under the sun. We invariably find, however, that its prevalence is in inverse ratio to the degree of enlightenment existing in any such country; possession being among the most ordinary of phenomena in Negroland, very common in Abyssinia, not unfrequent in Turkey and Arabia, occasional in Spain and Italy, almost unheard of in England. The inference is obvious. Nevertheless there is a certain residue of obstinate facts, or supposed facts, which ought to be scrutinised,—first, that it may be ascertained whether they are really facts at all, then that, in the event of their proving to be such, it may be shown what conclusion they do tend to establish, if it be not that of demoniacal possession. As a contribution to this interesting inquiry, we propose to detail one of the most remarkable of these few cases, after materials furnished by Dr. Justinus Kerner, the well-known writer on the philosophy of the supernatural, on whose authority the whole story rests.† We shall then append some observations on Dr. Kerner's qualifications as an observer, premising in this place that we entirely acquit him of the remotest approach to intentional deception. Before entering upon the narrative, it may not be amiss to add a few words in illustration of the exact question at issue. This is not whether people ever *believe* themselves to be animated by evil

* See Professor Maurice's *Theological Essays*, and the remarks of his able critic in the *Prospective Review*.

† *Geschichten Bessessener neuerer Zeit*, &c. Karlsruhe, 1835.

spirits,—which is admitted,—but whether the belief is well grounded. The one inquiry to be steadily kept in view is, whether the patient's behaviour is such as to be only explicable on the hypothesis of a supernatural agency, or whether the fact of his belief in such agency may not sufficiently account for it. A man, it may be argued, believes in the existence of demons; he believes that they are sometimes permitted to take possession of a human organism, and convert its physical and intellectual machinery to their own use; he has well-defined ideas as to the probable character of the actions and demeanour of a demon thus incarnated; and so, falling into some strange malady, which he is led to identify with diabolical possession, he naturally adapts his own behaviour to the supposed circumstances of his case. A parallel instance is afforded by the rare, but perfectly authenticated, disorder of *lycanthropia*, the sufferer from which, imagining himself a wolf, howls inarticulately, roams in churchyards by night, and endeavours to dig up the dead with his hands. Perceiving, however, that his exterior is in no respect metamorphosed, and that he simply imitates the demeanour of a wolf in the same manner that a sane person might if so disposed, we discern in him merely the victim of an hallucination. If, therefore, we find supposed demoniacs merely mimicking the probable behaviour of a demon, as lycanthropists mimic the habits of a wolf, our conclusion must be the same in the former case as in the latter; but if they exhibit phenomena irreconcilable with the idea of a natural mental action, however morbid,—if, for example, they predict events correctly, or speak in language previously unknown to them,—some other explanation must be resorted to.

Anna Maria U—, the subject of Kerner's narrative, was born in the kingdom of Wurtemberg, Dec. 31, 1799. She is described by him as a pious, cheerful, industrious woman; married, healthy, and the mother of three children. In August 1830, without previous warning, she became subject to convulsive paroxysms, during which she lost the consciousness of her own personality, assuming the character of some deceased individual, and supporting it with entire consistency of voice, speech, and action. On her recovery, she had, or professed to have, no recollection of any thing she had said or done during her fit. The following anecdote is given as an example.

"After she had been afflicted for four months, a strange voice said out of her to her brother, 'Do you know who I am?' 'No,' was the reply. 'Do you remember having ever stolen pears?' 'Once, when a boy, from such a one.' 'I am he!' On her recovery from her paroxysm, she declared herself ignorant both of what she had said, and of her brother's boyish theft. From this time, whenever she was afflicted, the voice of this person spoke continually out of her, howling, raving, and pouring forth execrations against God and every thing holy. Several medical men were called in, who treated her with belladonna, stramonium, and all the most drastic remedies in the pharmacopœia, which were altogether ineffectual."

Indeed, Kerner's words might be taken to mean that they did not even produce any physical effect; but he expresses himself so ambiguously as to render it doubtful whether this is really what he intends to imply. Prayer was found more efficacious, also "magical application," whatever this may mean. On two occasions she was taken on a pilgrimage to a Roman Catholic chapel, to the immense disgust of the demon, who shrieked, cursed, threw her into the most fearful convulsions, and tossed her up and down like a ball. The priests, however, refused to exorcise her, as she did not belong to their communion, but allowed her to go in and pray before the altar, which had the effect of quelling the evil spirit for a while. At one time he seemed to have forsaken her altogether, but soon returned accompanied by another, as was inferred from her speaking with two distinct voices. Sometimes a legion of fiends appeared to take possession of her, and the clamour on such occasions is compared to that of a pack of hounds. Amid all these horrors her confinement occurred, which was the means of procuring her some respite, as the demon appeared to have no power over her while her innocent babe was in her arms.* How, under these circumstances, she ever came to part with it is a question which it would be useless to address to the worthy Kerner, who, an enthusiastic cultivator of demonology in all its branches, has neither eyes nor ears for any thing at variance with his preconceived opinions.

The woman having now suffered more than two years, medicine having proved a delusion, and prayer only a palliative, recourse was had to a peasant, a match for the best medium in Massachusetts in piety, faith, and mesmeric influence. This veteran in diabolic warfare altered the plan of attack, and sought to ameliorate the physical condition of the patient by raising the moral standard of the demons. After eleven weeks of incessant supplication, fasting, and magnetism, he brought the

* This ancient, general, and beautiful superstition is graphically illustrated in the legend of Twardowski, the Polish Faust. Satan, weary of the services the magician is continually requiring at his hands, decoys him to a house in Cracow, where, for some unexplained reason, he expects to have him at a disadvantage. Put on his guard by the indiscretion of a flock of ravens and owls, who cannot suppress their satisfaction at seeing him enter the house, Twardowski snatches a new born child from the cradle, and paces the room with it in his arms. In rushes the devil, as terrible as horns, tail, and hoofs can make him; but confronted with the infant, recoils and collapses instantaneously. This suggests to him the propriety of resorting to "moral suasion," and after a while he thus addresses the magician, "Thou art a gentleman, and knowest that *verbum nobile debet esse stabile*." Twardowski feels that he cannot break his word of honour as a gentleman, replaces the child in the cradle, and flies up the chimney with his companion. In the confusion of his faculties, however, the demon would seem to have mistaken the way—at all events, the pair fly upwards instead of downwards, Twardowski lustily intoning a hymn, till suddenly he finds his companion gone, and himself fixed at an immeasurable height in the air, and hears a voice above him saying, "Thus shalt thou hang until the day of judgment!" He has, however, changed one of his disciples into a spider, and is in the habit of letting him down to collect the news of earth. When, therefore, we see any floating threads of gossamer we may suspect that "a cher's among us taking notes," though it is not equally probable that he will ever "prent them."

first of them to prayer and repentance, and ultimately ejected him "with an audible explosion." A concentrated attack was about to be made upon the second and more obstinate intruder, when an unforeseen impediment presented itself in the shape of the police, who (doubtless *suadente diabolo*) came down upon the exorcist and locked him up. The charge was swindling, the defence able, the result his release, and the condition of it that he should make no further attempt to cast out any devil or devils. Dr. Kerner now took the command, the patient becoming an inmate of his house on Feb. 23, 1833. He found her to all appearance a very excellent woman, honest and pious. As might be expected, she was greatly emaciated from her protracted and strange disorder. Her eyes had a peculiarly spectral appearance, like that by which Italians profess to recognise a *jettatore*, and gave her continual pain, which she attributed to the demon's looking out of them. She took no offence when the diabolical origin of her malady was disputed, merely expressing a natural wish that the medical gentlemen would relieve her sufferings first and discuss the cause of them afterwards. Except when under the influence of her paroxysms, there was not the slightest symptom of insanity in her demeanour. Her attacks were usually sudden, commencing with violent tremors; she would then close her eyes, and the demon, hurling her violently to and fro, began to pour forth a torrent of execrations. According to his own account, this personage was by no means a fallen angel, but simply a good-for-nothing miller who had hanged himself about fifteen years previously, and whom she had never known in her life. When the paroxysm had abated, she gladly turned to prayer; a proceeding highly obnoxious to the evil spirit, who would thrust out her tongue, dilated to a preternatural bulk, distort every muscle of her countenance, and convert her words to blasphemies. An exorcist (it is not said who) was at hand to lend assistance on such occasions; and Kerner protests most solemnly that every injunction he laid upon the demon in Latin, a language of which the patient was entirely ignorant, was understood, and, if it suited the fiend's humour, obeyed. This might, Kerner assures us, be authenticated by numerous witnesses, but, as he does not produce them, the assertion must be taken for what it is worth.

After duly reconnoitring the scene of operations, Kerner determined upon the employment of magnetism as his principal remedy. The ordinary method of magnetising (making passes from head to foot) proved entirely ineffectual, but no sooner had the process been reversed than results began to manifest themselves. Three passes usually sufficed to throw the sufferer into a condition between sleeping and waking, when a voice, supposed to be that of a guardian angel,* was heard speaking within her, and promising her deliverance. She used to declare while in

* "During this attempt a small faint voice was heard saying, 'Why don't you adjure?' (This was heard in a small sweet voice, supposed to be that of a good spirit.) On which the clergyman commanded, &c. (A Narrative of the late extraordinary Case of Geo. Lukins, &c., Bristol, 1788.)

her trance that the good spirit was strengthened by magnetism, and the demon enfeebled. The latter seemed to be of the same opinion, as he did all he could to interrupt her slumbers, and overwhelmed the guardian spirit with abuse. Being asked on one occasion where the soul of the woman was while he had possession of the body, he answered that it was away with "the beggar," meaning the angel. He opposed an equally active resistance to the attempted administration of medicine, rarely allowing the patient to partake of any thing but soup, and frequently avowing his intention to famish her to death. It was nevertheless evident that the remedial measures adopted were not without effect upon him: after long-continued adjuration and magnetism, he would appear so far subdued as to permit the patient to be brought to an open window, which afforded her much relief; although, indeed, he seldom failed to start up when least expected and hurl her violently backwards, where she would lie for a quarter of an hour senseless and apparently inanimate. Yet the power of the benevolent spirit appeared on the increase, and after a while the patient began to fall from time to time into a magnetic trance spontaneously, without any external application of mesmeric agency. During these trances the voice of the angel was distinctly heard comforting her, and promising ultimate relief.

At this stage of the narrative Kerner resigns his pen to a medical friend, on whose confirmation of his own statements he seems to rely as an effectual antidote to any scepticism the reader may hitherto have entertained. As, however, he neither gives this person's name, residence, nor any thing tending in the smallest degree to authenticate his assertions, it is hardly likely that any other effect will be produced than an additional distrust of the observations of one so imperfectly sensible of the nature and value of testimony. The change in the narrator is so far advantageous that the story gains in clearness and vividness. The new witness describes the patient as a mild quiet woman, fond of knitting and domestic employments, whose natural condition presented nothing peculiar. "She is communicative without being loquacious, and prays frequently, especially in the open air. Her frame is much emaciated, but there is less alteration in her features than might have been expected. A spasmodic closing of the eyes is frequently observable. She complains principally of the misrepresentations to which her disorder exposes her; of the sorrow which her husband, children, and other connexions suffer on her account; and of being a burden to her physician and his benevolent family. Her appearance when magnetised is that of a quiet sleeper, except that she sits quite erect and immovable, the eyes gently shut, her visage composed, but without that entranced expression which I have noticed in many somnambulists." This last remark is of importance, as showing that Kerner's friend was already a student of mesmeric phenomena, not, therefore, the sceptical, or even the unbiased observer, whose testimony it would have been so desirable to obtain. It is a general remark, applicable to all narratives of demoniacal possession, that, al-

though many have been compelled to acknowledge the manifestation of symptoms respecting which they were previously incredulous, no one seems inclined to resort to the hypothesis of a supernatural agency unless already prejudiced in its favour.

After repeating and confirming Kerner's statements in the main, the second physician continues :

"Between one and two in the morning (of March 23d) the paroxysms lost something of their dreadful character, and the speech of the demon became mild, sometimes plaintive. 'He felt,' he said, 'that he must quit the woman's body, and would do so, only we must give him time, and not make such a dead set at him (meaning the adjurations in the name of Jesus); if one did but know *how terrible it was outside* (here the body shuddered) one would have pity upon him, and not press him so hard.'"

The next time the patient was magnetised, her guardian spirit was understood to confirm all the assertions of the demon, to declare that he was fast becoming a real penitent, to recommend a milder method of treatment, and to predict that he would be dislodged between eleven and twelve A.M. What follows reminds us of the stage-direction: "Villain leans against side-scenes, and becomes virtuous." The convulsions gradually decreased in violence, the demon's conversation began to take an edifying turn, and at length he voluntarily declared that he would go that very day, but could not do so until he had made a full confession of the sins of his earthly existence, to which end he required to be continually questioned and admonished to tell the truth. Kerner and his friend accordingly set to work, and extracted the diabolical autobiography piecemeal. During his examination, the evil spirit made perceptible advances in moral excellence, and manifested an especial desire to be thoroughly acquainted with the nature of sin. A little before noon, his confession being ended, the woman swooned thrice, and the demon took his departure with a loud sound like blowing. On recovering from her trance, the patient was tested with some additional exorcisms; but these being void of effect, and the improvement in her appearance and manner unmistakable, her recovery, rather prematurely as it proved, was considered certain.

The communications of the evil spirit were to the following effect: His name had been Kaspar B—r, and he had been born in 1783. From his infancy he had shown an evil disposition, and in particular a great propensity to falsehood. His father spoiled him by over-severity, his mother by over-indulgence, and a limited capacity prevented his profiting by the instruction he received at school. As he grew up his conduct became more and more dissolute, till at length he killed one of his companions in a drunken scuffle. "The matter was not inquired into; I had no peace, and yet did not repent. Once I robbed a miller's lad of his watch, and was never suspected; I sold it for a trifle, which I wasted. I continually falsified the reckonings in the mill; yet I did some good, as I sometimes gave the embezzled meal to the poor." It was here ob-

jected that he had no right to claim any merit on this ground, the meal not having been his own. "I cannot think," he replied, "that it was a sin; it did no harm to the rich, and profited the poor." It was very difficult to convince him on this point, but at length he was brought to express a sort of conditional repentance, and continued his narrative as follows:

"I was now married, and had a mill of my own. We had no children. My wife was a dear, good woman, who always dealt kindly with me, and admonished me to reform my course of life. I paid no heed to her warnings, nor regarded her trouble; yet I was, at least, not unfaithful to her. I went about from tavern to tavern, and, so long as I received my money myself, it remained but a very short time with me. At last my wife took it into her own hands, but gave me all she was able, and continued to speak kindly with me. Oh, she was a good woman! But I paid no regard to her, and became worse and worse. At length she lost patience, and told me that she was ashamed to look her friends in the face, they having always been against the match, and if I did not reform, she must procure a divorce. This greatly angered and terrified me. I would not be divorced, and yet would not stay with her, as I felt ashamed in her presence. The devil entered me, and drove me out of the house. I ran to Ellevargen, called in two or three debts, and turned the money into drink. The people did not pay me much, as they knew my wife was housekeeper. I could not resolve what to do. Sometimes I thought of returning, but felt too much ashamed; sometimes of going abroad and taking service in a mill, but for this I was too proud. I thus came to Westhausen, where I spent the night. I could not sleep, and, urged on by my troubled mind, came at length to a coppice, where it occurred to me to hang myself, thinking that this would be the best way to vex my wife."

On being asked whether he had not regarded suicide as a sin, he replied that he had never thought of that, and had at the time no belief in a future life. "I fastened a handkerchief about my neck, and hung myself to a tree, so low that the extremities of my feet touched the ground. It was soon over; but meanwhile I recollected with sorrow that I should not be buried. After being found, I was taken away and dissected."

Here the demon and the patient respectively went to sleep. On the former again giving signs of existence, his depositions* were formally read over to him, and he amended them by admitting that, notwithstanding his assertions to the contrary, he had been unfaithful to his wife. He then continued:

"Since I hung myself in 1818, I have been obliged to dwell in the

* It is said that similar documents obtained in the proceedings against the priest Urban Grandier—proceedings in which we presume the staunchest believers in demoniacal agency now see nothing abnormal except the wickedness of those who set them on foot—are still preserved in the French Archives, authenticated by the autographs of the demons.

air in the shape of a wasp, till, sixteen weeks since, I was able to enter the body of this woman, and have tormented her dreadfully ever since. I hardly knew her before; she was only a child, and I never troubled myself about children, nor any one but the companions of my debaucheries. Her father never employed me, but was good to me in other respects, and a very worthy man. I have occasioned him much care and trouble; and how I have tormented this woman's mother and children and husband! I could not help it; I must do it; but was it not a great sin? Oh, how I repent!—yes, I now see my wickedness, and repent it bitterly, and beg the pardon of all I have injured. Oh, if I could but pray! The woman can, I cannot, and never could. If I could, I might get a little step higher, and might hope not to be rejected for ever."

"On hearing this, I" (Kerner's friend) "asked, 'Canst thou not say penitently, "God be merciful to me a poor sinner?"' 'Yes,' cried a voice from the patient joyfully, 'yes, I can!' and added in a tone of indescribable pathos, 'God be merciful to me a poor sinner, strengthen me in my repentance and penance, and suffer me to find mercy!' Whereupon ensued the final convulsions, and the deliverance of the patient, as already described. In the course of the evening Kerner took occasion to ask her whether it was not permissible to take something from the rich in order to relieve the poor. Visibly astonished, she answered without hesitation, 'How can this be?—theft is theft, however the stolen goods may be applied.'"

Kerner's colleague concludes by assuring us that the inquiries set on foot had already resulted in the verification of a great portion of the demon's confession. They were still in progress when he wrote, but we hear no more of them. To expect either him or Kerner, with their notions of testimony, to condescend to authenticate this assertion by the production of any sort of tangible evidence, would clearly be as unreasonable as to receive it while this confirmation is withheld.

Kerner proceeds to detail the unfortunate relapses of his patient, which at first appeared calculated to bring no small scandal upon the art and mystery of exorcism. It appeared that while demon No. 1 had been victoriously combated as above, demon No. 2 had been lying *perdu*, and upon the disappearance of his comrade, he came forth and asserted himself. When eventually overcome by the usual means, demon No. 2 (a smith guilty of perjury and poisoning) only made room for demon No. 3, who far surpassed his fellows in power and wickedness. Kerner, who had known this personage in his life, relates, with evident sincerity, how the woman was nearly destroyed, and the observers reduced to despair.

"It is certain," he says, "that my patient neither had, nor could have ever heard or seen any thing of this man. So often, however, as he had possession of her, her features assumed the precise cast of his, which were very peculiar, and she related circumstances from his former life which could not possibly have been known to her."

After every attempt by the ordinary means had proved fruitless, the

woman was eventually delivered by the interposition of "a stranger of great experience in such matters," respecting whom, and his method of operation, Kerner expresses himself very mysteriously. His success was so great as not only to rescue the patient from this particular demon, but to insure her against all similar attacks for the future. A year afterwards, her husband wrote to Kerner: "My wife continues perfectly well, prays and works without any disturbance, and joins with me in thanking God, who, through your instrumentality, has freed us from the affliction that had weighed so heavily upon us for so many years."

The fact of our having undertaken the consideration of this narrative at all, will of itself indicate that we are not among those who regard demoniacal possession as a thing essentially incredible. Such a conclusion is a necessary corollary from the denial of the possibility of abstract spiritual existence apart from the body, but very illogical on any other hypothesis. If spirits exist in a disembodied condition, they must necessarily operate in some way or other upon something; and upon what should they operate except upon beings analogous to themselves,—that is, other spirits, whether associated with a corporeal envelope or not? The real *a priori* objections to demoniacal agency upon mankind repose on a totally different basis—the extreme difficulty of reconciling it with the wisdom, order, and harmony observed in all other departments of the material and spiritual creation. This argument would be unanswerable, were it not that experience teaches us that, although fair judges of the *general* scope and tendency of Providential arrangements, the imperfection of our vision frequently blinds us to the significance of particular portions of them; while the invariable tendency of augmented knowledge is to clear up apparent difficulties, and display what at first appeared chaotic and discordant contributing in its turn to the universal harmony. Such considerations may convince us that we are not justified in summarily rejecting any opinion on the ground of its clashing with our preconceived impressions of the beneficence of Nature, but by no means relieve us from the duty of subjecting any thing thus apparently inharmonious to the most severe scrutiny. It must be apparent how ill-fitted Kerner's narrative is to sustain any such test. From first to last, not one single incident is properly authenticated. The patient is anonymous, the witnesses are anonymous, the demons are anonymous. It is true that Kerner's colleague assures us that the confessions of the last had been substantially verified; but who is to verify the verification? What might possibly be good evidence in Wurtemberg in 1833, where and when the witnesses may have been known to several persons, is no evidence to foreigners in 1861. Moreover, on the hypothesis of imposture, and the supposition that the woman designedly adapted her revelations to her previous knowledge, it is clear that the result of inquiry must be to confirm them. There is little in the narrative to relieve the patient from such a suspicion; and it is certain that even more ingenious and deliberate schemes of deception have at various times been conceived, and successfully carried out, with less

apparent motive, at equal personal inconvenience, and under the eyes of far more penetrating observers. We do not ourselves think it necessary to resort to this explanation; the existence of demonomania appearing to be established by other instances, and the admission of it not in itself involving any irrational consequences, since, if one hypochondriac may imagine himself a bottle, and insist on being decanted, it is difficult to see why another may not take himself for a demon, and invoke the aid of an exorcist, provided always that the existence of a demon is as much an article of belief with him as that of a bottle with his fellow-patient. In justice to the woman, moreover, we should make large allowance for the manner in which her proceedings must have been coloured by the observers' state of mind. Nothing can be more probable, for example, than that half her speeches were indirectly suggested to her. It is sufficiently amusing to find the devil asking for leading questions; and we should have entertained a poor opinion of the exorcists' ingenuity if, with so liberal an invitation, they had failed in eliciting any answers they thought proper. It would also much gratify us to learn how often the Latinising exorcist had to speak, and what gesticulations he may have used, before he succeeded in conveying a distinct impression of his meaning to the mind of the patient or her diabolical representative,—after which, we have no doubt, he was obeyed with all imaginable docility. Similar feelings would also influence the preparation of the narrative; and if the observers' recollections ever varied, we may be certain that they would act upon the Christian principle of giving the devil the benefit of the doubt. Worst of all, where are those most indisputable testimonies of the victory of truth, the converted sceptics? Incredulous medical men are by no means hard to find in Germany or elsewhere, and we should have thought the rumour of this case would have brought them about Kerner's house like astronomers about a comet. Can it be that the worthy Kerner shut the door in their faces? or, more horrible yet to imagine, that they came, and saw, and were *not* convinced? We cannot tell; certain it is that he would have paraded their testimony, if he could in any wise have got it. The only strong part of his case is the extreme *vraisemblance* of the confessions of the demon, which must be acknowledged to be worthy in this respect of the authoress of *Adam Bede* herself.

It comes, then, to this, that, anonymous witnesses being as good as none, a fact in itself difficult of belief, pregnant with the most momentous corollaries, and on both these grounds requiring to be established by the strongest and most precise testimony, rests altogether upon the assertions of the most notorious visionary in Europe, a man who has been more successful than any other in reconciling the maximum of integrity with the minimum of credibility. The utmost that such evidence can accomplish is to raise a sort of vague uneasy suspicion that the belief to which it points *may* be true; and this is the feeling which, of all others, the serious inquirer after truth most abominates. It is, however, one to which he is usually compelled to submit when he directs his investigations towards

what are termed the occult sciences. A general immunity from the rules which govern testimony in other instances seems to have been vouchsafed to all demons, ghosts, witches, chairs, and tables. Because no evidence will satisfy some, others seem determined to redress the balance by being themselves satisfied without a particle. Who ever saw a ghost-story authenticated by the names and addresses of living persons, or a "medium" with any conception that the demand upon testimony rose in proportion to the importance of the conclusions involved in it? It seems probable that such subjects may become themes of much more general investigation and comment than has hitherto been the case; and if this paper should induce one person to inquire into them in a philosophic spirit, and to publish, if any thing, every name, date, and incident connected with them, it will not have been written in vain. Darkness is an evil certainly; "more light" was alike the prayer of the combating Ajax and of the dying Goethe. But better substantial honest darkness than the ambiguous twilight in which every thing may be any thing, and any thing nothing.

R. G.

The Evil Eye.

A SKETCH FROM LIFE

THERE is a little watering-place on the coast of England which, having gained, by some capricious turn in the wheel of fortune, a great reputation for salubrity, is thronged during the summer months with the prettiest of faces and the smartest of petticoats, to say nothing of the variety of hats, nor the redundancy of the locks of the fair daughters of our isle, as they sun themselves on the crowded beach of Rockingbourne.

From early dawn to early dinner-time the sands, the beach, the cliffs, and the esplanade are dotted with all the colours of the rainbow; but after that time Rockingbourne is a desert. Nobody is to be seen. Nobody knows where every body or any body is gone. The gay world has fled from the sea-shore, and plunged into the surrounding country.

Here comes my story. I was wrong to say nobody was to be seen after that mid-day dispersion. There was one figure faithful to that far-stretching esplanade morning, noon, and night. One figure I never missed amongst the gay throng,—never failed to meet when no other soul was out to bear her company; and this not only in summer, but in spring, autumn, and winter. You could not spend a week at Rockingbourne at any time of the year without becoming as intimate with that tall, stately woman (by sight) as you are with your opposite neighbours in London,—perhaps more so. You could not take a day-ticket and go down to Rockingbourne to look for a house, and while away an odd half-hour on the pier, without the very boatmen pausing as the shadowy apparition floated rapidly by, and informing you gratuitously that “that ere’s Miss Lily Vaughan.”

I once spent an autumn and winter at Rockingbourne for health. I spent the following summer there for pleasure; and during the whole of that time I felt convinced that there must be some story attached to Miss Lily Vaughan, although it was not until the final close of my sojourn that I happened to meet some one who could tell it to me.

She did not live alone. She had an old mother in her dotage, who used to be drawn along the esplanade regularly twice a day in a Bath-chair. At first I had an idea that the daughter too was out of her mind, though in a different way; but no one corroborated this suspicion of mine; on the contrary, a friendly fisherman used to shake his head when I suggested it, and say: “No, it ain’t quite that; though, to be sure, she do look uncommon different to other folks.”

But if it were not “quite that,” what was it? There is a vast difference between singularity and eccentricity. Miss Lily Vaughan was singular without being eccentric. She differed in no respect from other people in the fashion of her garments, though she always wore one uniform colour—gray all the year round on week-days, black all the year round on Sun-

days; gray from head to foot, black from head to foot. It was in this that her singularity consisted, in the first instance; in the second it was in her personal appearance, her height (too tall for a woman), her easy, stately grace,—for, rapid as her movements were, she seemed more to float along than to walk,—and in her beautiful profile, the last remnant of early attractions.

Miss Lily Vaughan had been a beauty, there could be no doubt about that; but now her cheek was hollow, her complexion gone, and her hair gray; yet no one could pass her without saying, “Who is she?” As for her acquirements, they were those of a lady, though I only found them out accidentally. It was by hearing her explain to a German governess in the purest French the postage of a letter that I discovered she was familiar with both languages. It was by overhearing her translate the despair of a bewildered Italian gentleman at the railway-station to the officials who had unintentionally misled him as to his train, that I found she was equally at home in *that* language. Yet, with such accomplishments, why did Miss Lily Vaughan hide herself at Rockingbourne? unless, indeed, as I whispered to myself whenever I met her, she was the heroine of some story.

“And if she be,” said the old fisherman again, when I confided to him my conviction,—“even if she be, nobody won’t never find it out. They’ve got but one servant, and she’s as close as wax. They’ve been at Rockingbourne now a matter o’ fifteen years, and nobody’s none the wiser.”

“But people who have ever lived in the gay or the great world at all would be sure to be found out by some friends of by-gone days, even at Rockingbourne.”

The old man shook his head.

“Not if they ain’t a mind to it,” was his emphatic reply. “Many’s the lady and gentleman as has said to me, they’re pretty nigh sure they know’d her face or her figure, or some’at; but they never got no further. She’ll down with her veil if you looks too close, and he’d be a bold man to try and see under it.”

He was right. I knew her figure and her general style so well, that I think, had I met her in Lapland, I should have recognised her again; but as for her face, a furtive glance was all she ever permitted stranger-eyes to take of it; and it was not until I had met her day after day and week after week that I had taken glances enough to assure myself that she had been a beauty of no common order.

And this had gone on, the old man said, for fifteen years.

Towards the close of my last summer at Rockingbourne, when the sea-air was just beginning to feel crisp and the mornings frosty, a friend, who had long lived out of England, came to stay with me. She was the mother of a large family of daughters, whom she had educated and married off abroad; and now returned, after an absence of eighteen years, to end her days in her native country. She had no fixed idea as

to where she should live. She wished to see a great many places before she came to any decision; and this feeling brought her down to Rockingbourne.

The day after she arrived we walked all the morning on the esplanade, and all the afternoon on the cliffs. In the evening we went down to the pier, to hear the band; and as we were returning leisurely to our house, deep in conversation, I suddenly felt my friend seize my arm, and ejaculate, "Good Heavens! how came she here?"

Startled by the grasp and the exclamation, I looked hastily about me, and saw nothing sufficiently alarming to account for her agitation, except the retreating figure of Miss Lily Vaughan, silent, swift, and shadowy as usual, fading away from sight in her gray draperies, like a wreath of smoke.

Then began my friend again: "How came she here? Why did you not tell me she was at Rockingbourne? What is she doing at this quiet place?"

"Who?" said I, doubtful for the moment whom she meant, and being myself so accustomed to the apparition that it no longer excited in me the least attention. "Have you seen any one you know?"

"I have seen Lily Vaughan!" she exclaimed, hurrying on, "and I had rather not see her again. Good Heavens!" she repeated, "how she recalls all my old days! how little altered, after all these years! What on earth could have brought her here?"

"Then you know her?" was my delighted rejoinder. "You are the first person I ever met who could tell me a word about her; and if she recalls your old days, you may perhaps be able to unravel the mystery. She is the mystery of Rockingbourne. We all say there must be some story attached to her; and if you knew her in bygone years, perhaps you can tell it to me?"

"Indeed I can," said my friend, whilst a smile of exceeding bitterness curled her lip; "no one better; but it is not a tale for the open air. We must go in; we must shut ourselves in the house, close the door, fasten the windows, and draw down the blinds; then, and only then, shall I be able to talk of Lily Vaughan, whose very name has set me off in such a tremor that I must have time to recover. Oh, the long years that have passed since last we met! Do you think she saw me? Which way did she go? Do you think," added she, lowering her voice, and looking almost fearfully round, "that she looked as if she knew me?"

I could not say; I had not observed. Lily Vaughan rarely looked at any one, and this was one amongst her many peculiarities; so that the chances were, my friend had escaped recognition.

"I hope it," she exclaimed fervently, as we hurried on; "and besides, I am more altered, I dare say, than she is. I should have known her again amongst thousands, and at any distance. Time deals lightly with such as she."

We reëntered the house, made fast the door, drew down the blinds, and then sat down and looked in each other's faces.

"I feel," said my friend, "as if something had happened to me—just as one feels on first waking in the morning after a great misfortune or affliction;" and she shuddered. I proposed a fire; for though only early in September, the evenings were chilly.

"Well, light it," she said, as I struck a lucifer under the mass of twigs and dried branches with which a grate at the seaside is generally filled; "light it, for company; the blaze is cheery, at all events, and my story needs it."

And up flared the bright flame, lighting the blanched cheeks and pinched lips of my friend with a lurid red. When the blaze flickered and fell, she looked ghastly.

You thought she had a story, she began; and you were right. You shall hear it, from the hour I first knew her to that in which we parted, never again to meet, as I had hoped; but Destiny has willed it otherwise, and why, Heaven only knows. Four-and-twenty years ago Lily Vaughan and I were girls together. It is nineteen years since we met last, yet I knew her again at a glance. Four-and-twenty years ago she was fourteen, and I three years her senior. In mind, in manners, in arts, and in the ways of the world, she was ten years, at least, in advance of myself; precocious in every thing, and fearfully fascinating; for there was something in her fascination singularly unpleasing. As for her temper, no one had ever ruled her; and, until the governess who finished my education went on to reside with Mrs. Vaughan, I doubt if any one had ever attempted such a thing. But my good and resolute Miss Marryat manfully undertook the task, of the difficulty of which you can judge when I tell you that when she entered on her duties Lily had just been expelled from a school in the suburbs of London. You will naturally imagine some grave fault was the cause of this disgrace; but no, the most extraordinary part of it was, that though insisting on her removal, the schoolmistress could put the girl's offence in no tangible form. All she could say was, that the influence—the *evil influence*—she exercised over her companions was such, that she must go. Every girl in the school stood by Lily Vaughan; the haughtiest spirit there bowed before her; and though the daily acts of insubordination, the half-yearly cases of open mutiny, and the wild defiance of half the school, were all distinctly traced to but one source, and that Lily Vaughan, the schoolmistresses themselves seemed awed into fear of her, and could neither say any thing but "Remove her," nor do any thing but expel her.

"You had better not," were the words she used when summoned before the Misses Cartwright to receive their decision; "you had better let me stay. If you expel me, you will live to repent it. You will regret it to the last day of your lives."

And though I heard they actually trembled before the youthful

audacity which thus set their punishment at naught, of course the sentence was put into execution; and Lily Vaughan was sent home to her widowed mother, to see what a governess at home could do.

But now (before we proceed to that), to show you how singularly prophetic was this first public essay of her mysterious power, from the day Lily Vaughan left the roof of the Misses Cartwright the school "went down," as the saying is; the girls left one by one; the eldest sister—she on whom Lily had fixed her fatal glance as she hurled at her the indignant warning against expelling her—died within a few months of the closing of the establishment; and the younger one fell into inextricable embarrassments. When I next heard of her, it was Lily herself who mentioned her, when we met at a Christmas ball.

"You remember," said she to me carelessly, "the youngest of those odious schoolmistresses of mine? I heard news of her to-day."

"What news?" I asked.

"She lies in a cellar in a street near Lisson Grove. She wrote to me for assistance, saying she had not an article of furniture but a chair, and nothing to cover her but rags; as for a bed, she had long ceased to own one. But I was not surprised. I told them both they would repent expelling me; and, if you recollect, I said I was sure they would live to repent it; and I should think they had done so."

It gave me a chill, my dear friend, and I turned disgusted from the beautiful creature who spoke. The next day I went through the snow, and found the street, and the house, and the room. All was true, except the fact of her *living* in it. The poor governess, covered with the rags that had served her through many bitter weeks as a bed, lay still in the placid sleep of death, though starvation was visible in every pinched feature of her face.

Helen, I make no remarks. I shall merely tell you case for case as each occurred; and when I have done, think what you please of Lily Vaughan.

To go on next to my quondam governess. She entered heart and soul into the enterprise of subduing a temper which even the poor feeble mother—a silly, weak woman, who idolised this only child—declared to be beyond mortal skill; and after two years she came to me in despair. She said she must leave.

"Miss Vaughan is but sixteen, and I should have liked to have watched over her at least one more year; but I cannot. She makes me too miserable, and I must give it up."

"But why?" I asked. "What does she do? She does not venture to treat you ill?"

"No; but the strain on my nerves is so great, I cannot support it."

"Nerves!" said I, laughing; "you never had any in my time."

She shook her head mournfully.

"I have found them now, and I have such headaches too that I am often unfit for my duties. When you know what health I once had, you

will be inclined to doubt me; but I assure you I sometimes feel quite distracted, as if I were incapable of commanding myself."

"Owing to her conduct?"

"No, oh, no; the feeling is unaccountable; it is impossible to describe it. I only know I must give up Miss Vaughan, unless some very great change soon takes place. I am sorry, because Mrs. Vaughan presses me so to stay."

"And Lily's temper?" said I.

"She never shows any of it to me," replied Miss Marryat calmly; and I marvelled what miracle she had wrought to gain so great a victory.

Soon after this I went abroad with my parents, and in the course of the following summer we met the Vaughans at Sorrento. I do not know what it was that prompted me; but almost my first thought when I saw Lily was of Miss Marryat, and almost my first question, "Where is she now?"

Judge of my horror, my grief, my distress, Helen,—you, who have a heart,—when the very same rosy, smiling lips which had told me so lightly of the miserable state of Miss Cartwright, now uttered the words: "Oh, didn't you know? Poor thing, she went quite mad!"

"Mad!" I echoed; "what can you mean? You are not speaking literally?"

"Indeed I am," was the answer. "We did all we could for her; though, between ourselves, I never could endure her. At first she was very odd, and out of spirits, and nervous, and all that; she would never go out, and had a great dislike to being noticed; and so it went on, from bad to worse, till at last we sent her away."

"To her home?" I asked.

"Oh, dear, no; I never heard of her having any home; but we gave her in charge to Dr. N——, and saw no more of her."

"Then perhaps she is now lingering in misery, in some private asylum?"

"No; she was too violent for that. She was taken to Hanwell, I know; and beyond that I can tell you nothing."

Now, Helen, as I said before, I shall make no remarks. I have laid *two* facts before you, and more are yet to come. If, when I close my tale, or rather when I have gone through the whole of Lily Vaughan's story, you smile, and say it is but a string of curious coincidences, then I have wasted my breath. But to continue.

Our girlhood was passing; and after the stage of governesses came the lovers. It did not surprise me to hear, some time towards the close of that year, that Lily Vaughan was engaged to be married; but I confess I was curious to see the man who had succeeded in winning that volatile heart, and enchaining that fickle fancy; for I had never myself heard her mention an admirer except in terms of either scorn or derision. Well, she wrote to tell me she was engaged, and to invite me to be bridesmaid; and she said the ceremony was to take place at Florence, because friends

who had a villa in the immediate neighbourhood had kindly allowed the wedding to be celebrated from their house; so her mother and herself would be found by us at the Villa P——, as soon as it suited us to arrive in Florence. We obeyed the summons. We reached the scene of action two days before the projected event; and as soon as I had a moment's *tête à tête* with my friend, of course our conversation was entirely of the bridegroom-elect. Was he short? was he tall? was he dark? was he fair? was he poor or rich?—in short, I was curious to know all about him.

"See him," said Lily; "for I do not pretend to be able to describe people. He was introduced to us by our host, Sir William Dartmouth,—an old friend of mamma's, and, in fact, a sort of guardian of mine,—and casually named as a gentleman in search of a wife to spend his four thousand a year for him. I thought I could manage to do that for him, and so I accepted him. There is the whole story."

"No heart in it, then?" said I, almost speaking aloud; for I was disappointed at the very small portion of romance there appeared to be in the arrangement, and Lily shrugged her shoulders.

"I don't feel quite the sort of girl for a red-hot love-match," she returned, with the usual sarcastic smile on her beautiful lips; "but as long as Mr. Temple Graham considers me perfection, I am quite satisfied."

That evening I saw Mr. Temple Graham, and was introduced to him as one of the bridesmaids. It was Sir William Dartmouth who presented me,—not Lily; she was lounging in a large chair, playing with a fan of red feathers, and veiling those eyes of hers under their thick and sweeping lashes.

Mr. Temple Graham struck me as the handsomest man I had ever seen; but I doubt if he saw *me*, for he had no eyes except for Lily. He sat by her side, or he hung over her chair, the whole evening; and yet she scarcely vouchsafed him a word. The next day it was just the same. We had a pic-nic, and the whole party spent the day in the open air. It was not until night that we returned, and then a supper was laid out *à fresco*, and the trees, conservatories, and terraces all lighted with coloured lamps. Still were all these beauties lost on Mr. Temple Graham. He saw in them acts of adoration towards one whom he thought worthy of any amount of worship; it was the object, not the throng of worshippers, by which his whole soul seemed absorbed; and yet, throughout the evening, she scarcely vouchsafed him a look.

"I am not going to spoil him," was her reply to a faint remonstrance of mine at a chance moment; "as long as he does not complain, I shall take my own way."

"Complain? O Lily, such a man as that would hardly complain," I said; "but is it treating him fairly? You ought to think yourself the luckiest of girls to have won such a heart, and yet you seem quite to grudge him one glance."

She laughed. "Silly creature," she called me, "were it not for that devotion, do you think I would look at him? Not I! no, nor at any

man with five times his attractions, and fifty times his wealth. I choose to be adored, but I don't mean to adore."

Heartless, heartless!—heartless and careless even on the eve of an event which was to link her destiny with one who, one short month before, was a complete stranger to her!

That evening we all inspected her trousseau and her jewels. They were of the most sumptuous description; and Mr. Temple Graham laughingly covered her with a superb suit of diamonds, to see how she looked in them. I shall never forget her, with her rich complexion, her coal-black hair, her majestic figure, as she sat there, again playing with the fan of red feathers, and smiling triumphantly as she shot glances of dazzling brilliancy at the circle round her.

I heard some Italians discussing her in the corner of the room as she sat thus.

"She is undeniably beautiful," said one; "but I would not risk my fate in her hands."

"You are right," said another; "magnificent as she is, it is a beauty from which one shrinks—a beauty one fears."

And one of the elder bridesmaids whispered to me as we went to our rooms at night, "She does not care a straw for him; it is nothing but gratified pride and vanity. She likes his adulation. If he neglected her, she would kill him."

As we all separated for the night, we missed Lily. We wanted to assemble in her apartments in proper order in the morning, and we had still a few words to say to her; but we could not find her. I volunteered to run back to the drawing-room, and see if she were there; and as I did so, I met her at the door, her hands full of her jewel-cases.

"I was just saying good-by to Mr. Temple Graham," said she; "he is so absurd, he would not bid me farewell before all the guests."

"And farewell for so long!" I exclaimed, laughing.

"Farewell till the momentous morn," she returned lightly; and then we joined the five young girls who were waiting for us in Lily's room.

The morning dawned at last,—bright as a bridal morning ought to be, beautiful as only an Italian morning can be; and we were all up with the dawn, in spite of our vigils. We decked Lily Vaughan in her snowy array, and we wreathed her lovely temples—you can see how lovely she must have been!—wreathed them with freshest orange-blossoms, heavy with fragrance; and then we asked for some of her jewels.

I do not know how it was, but we were all struck with a sudden silence when she answered, "Mr. Temple Graham has them all."

"Mr. Temple Graham!" I echoed; "why, I thought I saw your hands full of the cases last night?"

"Of the cases, yes," she replied; "but those costly jewels ought not to be mine until I am his wife. After the ceremony, he will adorn me with them himself."

We all looked at her with a feeling of awe, so proud in heart, so

majestic in person, yet without an ornament of any sort or kind to accompany her extraordinary beauty; *add* to it you could not.

Mr. Temple Graham, therefore, was to come to the house, and join the bridal party there. He was to bring back the jewels, and not present them finally until the irrevocable ring was on her finger. This was her whim; *we* suspected it was her command. Be that as it may, we all proceeded to the suite of drawing-rooms, and placed Lily in what we laughingly called a stage-attitude. Two huge old tapestried chairs stood in niches in two corners of the room. We drew out one and seated her in it, grouping ourselves around her as artistically as we could; and when we had finished, we looked to see the effect. All was perfect, save that we were vexed at the colour the bride-elect had turned. Helen, she had more the appearance of a spirit risen from the tomb than that of a living person; and I remember to this day that it struck a chill through us all. Had it not been for the sudden and bustling entrance of Sir William Dartmouth, the silence would have become painful.

But he came in with a bevy of gentleman-friends round him, ostensibly to ask if our clocks and watches all agreed with his, or if his had played him a trick.

"Temple Graham ought to have been here at half-past ten."

We all glanced at the clock. It was ten minutes to eleven. The cheeks of the bride could not well have been whiter than they had been all the morning; but it was now the turn of the bridesmaids. We all agreed afterwards that we actually felt ourselves grow pale; and as for Miss Dartmouth, she glided close to me, and whispered, clutching my arm, "Good Heavens! and he walked home in the dark with all those jewels on him!"

Of course, as the ten minutes passed, slowly, one by one, we counted each more breathlessly, and then eleven struck. Not a sound escaped our lips; but by degrees the gentlemen in the room slipped away; then the matrons dropped gradually off, all save Mrs. Vaughan, who moved nearer to her daughter. Then we heard a horse gallop down the hill which led up to the house, in the direction of the town. We could see from the windows all Florence stretched out before us, the white houses glistening in the sun. We could watch the rider galloping away, Helen; we saw him galloping back—and he was alone!

The news he brought was, that Mr. Temple Graham had not slept in his bed the previous night; that his servant, knowing he always let himself in when out late, had retired to rest, never entertaining a doubt as to his master's safety, and only knew of his absence on entering the empty room early the next morning. Even then he fancied some business connected with the wedding had detained him throughout the night at the Villa P——. So hours, valuable hours, were lost in prosecuting a search.

Such a search as was made for that missing man Florence had never known before. Every street, every house, every place under the sun of heaven, and even the swift-flowing Arno, were searched; until at last,

upon a heap of wood and dried leaves, some miles out of the town, in a lonely spot, as if he had crawled there to die, the body of Mr. Temple Graham was found, lying bathed and stiffening in the blood that had flowed from three deep stiletto-stabs in the back.

Time rolled on over the devoted head of Lily Vaughan, and we girls used to wonder amongst ourselves that the blow had not killed her. But no. Certainly we saw but little of her after the dreadful week of suspense, yet that little showed us how wonderful was her self-control; for she never shed a tear.

"But then," said Miss Dartmouth to me, the morning the Vaughans left the Villa P——, "I never thought she cared for him. She has felt the shock, and so have we. It is a question if she feels the loss, unless indeed it be of the jewels, for which most probably, thanks to her senseless whim, the man was murdered."

A year passed. We remained still in Italy, and the next we heard of Lily Vaughan was at Naples, where it seemed her beauty, her name, and her story were creating a perfect furor, not only amongst her own countrymen, but foreigners as well. The Neapolitans, however, are a most superstitious people. It was not long before they began to wonder in what consisted the marvellous fascination of the young Englishwoman. Some of them did not particularly admire her; but nevertheless they came under the spell, and succumbed beneath her power. It did not surprise me when, soon after the expiration of the year of mourning strictly enjoined by that poor old mother (who really had some good taste and feeling about her), we were told that Lily was engaged to be married to a Neapolitan nobleman of immense wealth.

The world of Naples were taken by surprise when they heard of this intended match. The young nobleman in question was one of those who had never particularly admired Lily; and she had known it. Possibly this added spirit to her endeavours; at all events, she gained her point; and, as I said, very soon after her reappearance in society, she went about as the *fiancée* of the Marchese di Santa Fiorita.

This time I was not asked to the wedding; but I had an intimate friend staying at Naples, who saw the engaged couple every day, and told me every minute particular connected with the progress of affairs.

It seems the family of the Marchese were exceedingly averse to the match. They thought no one good enough for the eldest son of their proud house, much less an unknown young English lady—unknown save by a notoriety which they considered unenviable. But the innamorato was deaf and blind to every friendly remonstrance, and sunned himself in Lily's eyes from dawn till dewy eve. And so it went on, until at last the whispers about her grew into fearful hints. The feverish imaginations of the Neapolitans heated themselves into dark surmises, and the father of the young Santa Fiorita, a weak old man, superstitious and completely in the power of the priests, sent for his brother, a dignitary of the

Roman Catholic Church, resident in the south of Italy, whom he had not seen for years, to assist him in this case of perplexity and distress.

The Cardinale di Santa Fiorita was a very different man from his brother. Stern, rigid, and austere in every principle of his life, a bigot from the crown of the head to the sole of his foot, and of the most energetic character, he answered the letter of his brother in person, and arrived at Naples in an incredibly short time, with a large retinue of priests and attendants, and surrounded by all the pomp and parade of high clerical estate, thereby filling the minds of the Marchese's family with awe and terror, as well as preparing them to abide by any decision he might come to with abject submission.

As far as the obedience and respect shown him by the old Marchese and the ladies of the family, nothing could have been more complete; but the bridegroom-elect had yet to be dealt with; and the reverend and illustrious uncle was duly informed that that young man was sacrificing his soul to perdition in the most headlong, obstinate, impetuous, and blind manner,—nay, that he actually gloried in his frightful infatuation, and paraded himself about Naples with the object for whom he was about to immolate himself in the most reckless and unblushing manner. The Cardinale listened to all that was told him with intense attention, his lips compressed, and his eyes cast down; a priest at each elbow, and two more standing with folded arms behind, all praying silently for the soul trembling on the yawning abyss. He listened till he had heard all,—all about Lily Vaughan, her marvellous beauty, her fascination, her apparent amiability, and, at last, all her antecedents; for these had been ferreted out from her earliest youth by the sisters, the aunts, the female cousins. The Cardinale now knew all; and when the recital was ended, he drew a long breath.

"He shall be saved," said he.

"Then it will be by a miracle," said the despairing father, bowing his head and crossing himself.

"He shall be saved," repeated the Cardinale, looking at the four priests with a significant glance, and they all simultaneously bent assent; "but," he added, "I must see the lady; after that I will see my nephew; and then—"

That evening the Cardinale di Santa Fiorita, followed by his attendant train, passed through the suite of rooms lighted up for company; and as he swept through the bowing throng on his way to the oratory of the Palazza Santa Fiorita, it had been arranged that Lily Vaughan should stand where he could distinguish her from description, and see her well. This was not difficult. That commanding figure, nearly equal in height to his own, stood erect amongst the bending crowd, and met his glance with one of cold defiance. By her side stood the Marchese. People heard her say to him, as the Cardinale approached:

"You may bow—I shall not; but you must not leave my side."

The young man's answer was a look of devotion and confidence, and with a proud and happy smile on his lips he prepared to designate to his

magnificent-looking relative, as he neared the group, the lady of his choice. With a movement of his hand, graceful but imperative,—as if to say, “You see her, and you see that my infatuation is justifiable,”—Lily Vaughan was presented to the Cardinale, who suddenly, to the surprise and dismay of all present, made a full stop before them, and a dead silence ensued.

“Bernardo,” said the priest, slowly, calmly, and so distinctly that every word was heard throughout the vast assembly,—“Bernardo, a word with you; follow me.”

The Marchese stood irresolute. He had evidently been prepared by his family for some such act of authority on the part of the Cardinale; and had it not been for the immediate presence of Lily Vaughan, no doubt the imposing circumstances of the scene would have had their due effect on him, since the name and fame of his uncle had been from infancy rung in his ears as a watchword of all that was awful and authoritative. As it was, it was only for a moment that he wavered; the next he had regained his erect and somewhat haughty bearing, and bowed a negative. And what gave him courage for so daring a breach of respect? who had changed his whole nature so completely that he had dared to defy a holy father of the Church? It was the cold, clear, lustrous eye of Lily Vaughan, fixed upon him from the moment when first the Cardinale approached. Her lips too had moved, though those around had not caught the sounds that had issued from them.

But no doubt, to the ear of the Marchese, her words had had as great an effect as her eyes; for it was evidently by a most powerful effort that he resisted the calm command of the Cardinale. The latter, however, was not daunted by either the defiance of his nephew or the beauty of the intended. He still kept his eyes fixed on young Bernardo, although his countenance had undergone a slight change; the colour had faded from it, and the muscles round his mouth quivered. Suddenly he laid his right hand on his breast, and bending the second and third fingers inward on the palm, he left extended the first and fourth.

Helen, the Neapolitans are naturally a superstitious race, as I said; but there is one superstition they cherish above all others. That sign made by the Cardinale caught many a quick dark eye, but none flashed with a greater expression of sudden terror than that of young Santa Fiorita. In spite of the glance of Lily Vaughan fastened on him,—in spite of whispered words falling emphatically from her half-closed lips,—in spite of even her jewelled hand laid on his arm,—the sign blanched his cheek, and he staggered a pace or two forward. It was this movement that had made him at first look irresolute, and roused the indignation of Lily Vaughan; and since words were evidently of no avail, she tried the strong though imperceptible grasp of her glittering fingers. But no; it was too late.

“Bernardo,” repeated the Cardinale, “you will follow me;” and the next moment the Marchese stepped out of the circle, his cheek bloodless,

his lips quivering, and drops of agony standing on his brow, and joined the priestly train.

The whole scene had not occupied more than a few minutes. Yet as the crowd closed in after the group had passed on, a sort of chill seemed to have been thrown over the whole assembly, and furtive glances of alarm and suspicion were cast towards the spot where Lily Vaughan, with a flash in her eye and a curl on her lip, had proudly resumed her seat. This was her first appearance at the Palazza Santa Fiorita; she had been asked there for an especial purpose; that purpose had been fulfilled, and it was therefore her last as well. Two years afterwards, Helen, I heard of her again—I saw her again; but of this more hereafter. Suffice it to say, that when we next met she was still Lily Vaughan; that the Cardinale had left Naples the morning after her introduction to him at the assembly; and that from that hour to this, what became of Bernardo di Santa Fiorita, Heaven only knows; for no mortal eye ever beheld him again, and in no mortal ear was his name ever breathed by Neapolitan lips. He had dropped from amongst the circle of the living; but how, no one ever told, the world never knew. Some few might have heard the secret; but, at all events, it was kept inviolate, and that dark mystery in the family of Santa Fiorita remains unsolved to this day.

What the Neapolitans whispered amongst themselves, those who know the superstition may guess. Certain it was, that after that night Lily Vaughan never showed her face in the sunshine again, but departed from the city when the deep shadows of evening concealed from view that ill-fated form; and for two years she and her mother wandered about the Continent from place to place, going away whenever they became talked about, and feeling that society of all grades had begun to look shy at them; not at that poor old helpless mother, but at the beautiful, majestic girl, who was never seen but that inquiries would spring up, and then she was avoided, shunned, held in dread, looked on with distrust. People began to say that they had rather not have any thing to do with them. In short, they could go nowhere without hearing these two stories revived and exaggerated; so that it did not surprise me to hear, in the spring of the year 183—, that Mrs. and Miss Vaughan had been seen landing, some weeks before, on the pier at Dover.

I will not say that I then shared the general feeling of shrinking from a rencounter with Lily Vaughan. It is true most painful and mysterious circumstances had marked her career since last we parted (in fact, so they had from her early youth); but still she had been my friend, and until the Neapolitan catastrophe I had even corresponded with her; therefore, though I cannot say I was ever fond of her, I looked forward to seeing her again at some time or another with a sort of interest considerably mixed up with curiosity. My own circumstances at this period were of a nature which led me to think with pity and sympathy on a being who had been the heroine of two such frightful mischances; for I was engaged to be married myself. At that time we were residing

in Hampshire,—my father, mother, and self,—expecting hourly the return of a beloved brother from India with his regiment; and in due course of time he arrived. We filled our house, we invited all our neighbours; there was no end to the festivities we contrived and encouraged; and as autumn approached we found ourselves deep in engagements to the houses of the country families for the shooting and the hunting.

Helen, you never knew that brother of mine,—that idolised only son of our house; but if you can picture to yourself one for whom any one of us would gladly have laid down our lives, and for whom in our adoration we thought the earth itself hardly good enough to walk upon, you may imagine what he was to us. But to continue. We were all staying, towards the close of October, at the beautiful seat of the master of the hounds, and had arranged one morning to meet at a place called Fenner's Farm, to see the hounds throw off. We were an immense party. All the hunt, of course, in their brilliant coats, and amongst them my brother, gallantly mounted on a superb animal, who pawed the ground impatiently, as his delicate nostrils puffed out the breath, like smoke, on the frosty air. How proud we were of him! how fondly we looked up at him from our little pony-phæton, as he rode up to our side before they all started!

"I came to tell you," said he, as he bent down by our sides, "that there is the most beautiful creature in the hunt I ever saw in my life. If you see me riding by her side, instead of being after the fox, don't despise me. She is the most magnificent girl, and I can find no one to tell me who she is."

We laughed. We thought nothing of this sudden admiration; he had been so long unused to the society of ladies whilst moving about with his regiment in India, that we made allowances for his thinking every young creature he met a Peri; but when the master of the hounds himself rode up to us, and said, "We have a new belle—a lady who will be in at the death, if her riding does not belie her appearance," then we felt curious to see her.

Helen, I was driving that day a pair of stout little black ponies, and in the seat behind sat he who was afterwards my husband, and an Italian friend, whom we wished to initiate into all the glories of an English hunting-field. His horse met him at Fenner's Farm; and as he threw himself on it, he said laughingly, "I also—I will go and be fascinated;" and he rode away.

In a few moments more we heard the inspiring cry of the hounds; we heard the rush of the whole hunt in the direction of the downs; and then, after a brief disappearance, we saw the matchless sight of a tiny speck flying for its life up the broad clear hill before us, the field at its heels one mass of red, with here and there a dark spot, and at the head of them all—a lady! How glorious and exciting seemed to me the sight of it that day! With what anguish and horror do I look back upon it now, though all these years have past!

In three hours stragglers began to return; but neither my brother nor our Italian friend. What news? we naturally asked. A splendid run, was the reply; and a lady was in at the death—a lady was returning with the brush in her hat; and Lord D——, our gallant host and master of the pack, smitten over head and ears, had invited the lady and her mother, who was in one of the neighbouring carriages, to come and stay at D—— Park until after the meet on the following Friday.

We now turned our ponies' heads towards home, leaving the gentlemen to follow when they pleased, satisfied that during the day no accident had happened to our treasure; but no sooner had we entered the park-gates than a rider came galloping up the avenue after us. It was our Italian friend, breathless and agitated.

"Mademoiselle," said he to me, whilst he looked as if he had seen a spectre,—"*mademoiselle*, I have had a great shock; nothing has happened, so forgive the alarm I have caused you by pursuing you thus; but I come to say I have had a great shock, and to prepare you. You must exert all your influence over your brother, or he is lost; he has been by her side all the day; he saw but her; he will live but for her, unless we act promptly. She has carried all before her to-day; and she is coming on here to-morrow, to stay in the very house. *Mademoiselle*, I may protect myself, but I cannot protect your brother from the fatal power. Speak to him; see him directly; say to him that it is he alone who can save himself,—I can tell him how."

Count d' Ascoli paused, and, singularly enough, so far were we from guessing the truth, that we actually laughed at his agitation; laughed heartily as he passed his handkerchief over his streaming brow; and set it all down to Italian "exaltation." We said we must leave Trevor to take care of himself.

"But no," said he vehemently; "if she *will* it so, he is doomed. He has rushed into it headlong; you must take him from it before it is too late; it is not until to-morrow that she comes."

"But who," we asked, "is this awful personage? Is the consternation universal?"

"No," he exclaimed, "of course not, because it is I only who recognised her; and you, *mademoiselle*, so lately in Italy, you must have surely heard of her? It is Miss Lily Vaughan!"

I will not deny that my mother started; and the reins dropped from my hands when he pronounced the name. It gave us both a turn which really seemed to make our blood run cold, although we certainly did not carry our superstitious terror so far as did Count d' Ascoli. But it startled us. Lily Vaughan on the scene again! Lily Vaughan so near! Lily Vaughan to be in our very presence once more! Helen, we did not like it; yet what could we do? Her story was evidently unknown to all the guests in that lordly house; and though, no doubt, it would transpire, we did not like to be the people to tell it. We heard her rapturous praises the whole evening; we were told of her faultless face and figure, her per-

fect hunting costume, her splendid seat, and the fascination of her manner. These praises rang from lip to lip. The only silent voice was my brother's; and at night my mother called him into her room. She was nervous; she was uncomfortable; she said she felt it might be called foolish, but she could not get over her dread of Lily Vaughan; and she told him all her story.

"Will you go home with us, darling boy, before she arrives? I can very easily make some good excuse; and she will never know, perhaps, that we have been here, and have avoided her."

But no; Trevor laughed us and our fears to scorn. He was evidently much struck, more than he chose to show, and would not hear of leaving the field ignominiously.

"I know who has been poisoning your minds; it is that absurd D'Ascoli. He behaved like a maniac in the field to-day, making all sorts of wild signs with his fingers, and wanting to teach them to me. Trust me, mother, I can take care of myself. There is nothing against the character of Miss Lily Vaughan; she is the most lovely creature I ever beheld; and as I happen to be an Englishman, and not a frantic Italian, I see no necessity for believing in all sorts of superstitious horrors."

Helen, I am drawing to the close of my story,—the fearful, agonising close, which even to this day fills my heart with anguish and my eyes with tears. Suffice it to say, the following day she came; and in the evening Trevor was the lucky man, as he thought himself, to secure her arm and take her down to dinner. I confess I was impressed with her loveliness more that day than I had ever been before, and was obliged to give a reluctant assent to the good taste of my brother; but every look she gave him chilled me; every glance of admiration he cast upon her made me shrink; and when my mother and I talked it over that night, we agreed that he was already too far gone to be remonstrated with, though we positively trembled to think that in a few weeks, or perhaps days, she might for the *third* time announce herself as "engaged to be married." We were powerless; we could only watch, and wait, and pray against vain fears, and hope the best.

Her arrival was on Wednesday evening. We had but little conversation with her that night, for she was so surrounded. The next day I tried to talk to her; but I found that some invisible barrier seemed to have sprung up between us. She spoke and talked to me as though I had been but the acquaintance of a few hours, instead of the friend, almost the confidante, of years. She behaved with a sort of nervous reserve, and never once alluded to the past. She turned from me as soon as she could to go out with a party of gentlemen down to the warren to see some rabbit-shooting (a new line she had struck out), and it was very evident that she was now Lily Vaughan anew, beginning life again under a phase quite distinct from that under which I had known her.

Helen, Friday morning dawned, bright, genial, and cheery; the ground moist and the air fresh; a hunting morning to perfection; and

the front of D—— Park was crowded with horses, carriages, and pony-phaetons, mine amongst the number. We were all standing on the flight of stone-steps awaiting our turn either to drive off or to mount,—as striking a group as any merry England could boast of; and the centre figure of it was Lily Vaughan, drawing on her white gloves, whilst her jewelled whip sparkled dazzlingly in the sun, and her scarlet feather waved in the breeze.

“Are you to win the brush again to-day, Miss Vaughan?” asked my brother, as he started forward to assist her to mount.

“Yes,” was her answer, clear and ringing; “either you or I.”

It was the last question I ever heard Trevor ask; it was the last sentence I ever heard *her* speak.

We all started. The carriages were to meet at the Hill Copse, as it was called; a pretty green on the skirt of a wood, from whence we commanded a fine view of the surrounding country. The hounds were a long time in finding, that day; but at last the well-known cry rang out over hill and dale, and the whole pack burst out and scoured up the open down, followed by the field, a lady at the head, a red feather streaming in the wind—Lily Vaughan, of course! On, on they went, up the hill, along the brow, and out of sight down the other side, till we thought we had lost them, when suddenly, across the high-road, about fifty or a hundred yards in advance of us, the hunted fox rushed madly, and with a simultaneous shriek of alarm, we watched to see if any rider would be mad enough to follow. I must describe to you the spot. The animal must have made an immense *détour*, and the noble spring he gave into the road would have drawn from us nothing but one cry of admiration, had we not felt that if by chance some runaway or over-excited huntsman, ignorant of the nature of the leap, were to approach the spot at full gallop, he could not stop himself in time, and to man and horse that leap must be death. But, Helen, we had no time for thoughts or fears or superstitions, before the whole pack of hounds came tearing through every possible hole in bush and brake, down the steep bank, over the wide ditch, across the road, and away, away, away, over a ploughed field after their panting prey. So far well; but in another moment other forms appeared at the top of the bank—a horse and its rider forcing their way through the thicket, and with one bold daring leap alighting with a faint shout of triumph in the road, and on, on, wildly again in the wake of the hounds. Good Heavens! the red feather! was she safe? Yes, safe; but our hearts stood still, the mother’s heart and mine, when we felt what would follow. We saw in the distance numbers of the hunt bursting out of the hedge and across the same road; but they had chosen less dangerous spots: it was for *her*, for *her only*, to lead on her victim to death; and on he came. Trevor was close behind her; she turned as she gained the level ground, turned in her saddle and waved him on; and on he came. Had it not been for that one fatal look, that gesture luring him on, I think my luckless brother would have turned aside and found

an opening lower down less hazardous. But no ; he caught the glance and the gesture, and he urged on his horse. The animal made the spring, miscalculated the width of the ditch, stumbled on the edge, and my brother was hurled to the ground. The creature, as if maddened with alarm, and yet anxious to overtake the ringing feet of its companion, struggled up, and dashed on before we could reach the spot. Helen, it did not pursue its furious flight alone ; the body of my brother was dragging at its heels with a heavy crushing sound, and till the animal reached the side of Lily Vaughan, and laid its mangled burden at her feet as she sat in the centre of the throng of huntsmen, it never stopped. Hedged in then by numbers, it was secured ; but long ere we and those who were in the carriage could reach the spot, my brother was a corpse ; and Lily Vaughan, like a spectre, sat gazing down, as if in a dream, upon the appalling scene. I see her now as I saw her then. I shall never get the expression of her face out of my head, nor its connexion with those hours of intense anguish. The sight of her to-day brought it all back to me. And now, Helen, you know all—you know that woman's story.

"And Count d'Ascoli?" I asked half-fearfully,—“what did *he* say?”

"He threw himself on the body ; he behaved as if it had been his own brother ; he was frantic ; and all his cry was, 'The Evil Eye! the Evil Eye!'"

My friend paused. Her recital was finished ; and for some time we sat in silent meditation. How singular, how horrible, was the story she had told me ; how difficult for even a calm English mind to think that such a fatality, appertaining to one human being, was the result of mere chance and accident ! But how still more dreadful for the chief actor and survivor of the fearful drama ! No wonder she shunned the eye of man and woman ; no wonder she veiled her face ; no wonder she sought the quietest retreat wherein to hide herself. The only wonder was, that she had outlived it all.

"You cannot now be surprised, Helen," said my friend, as the evening wore on, "that I can no longer rest here. I must leave you as early as possible to-morrow morning ; for if by chance she recognised me to-day, and were to seek me here, I do not lay claim to fortitude sufficient to bear the glance of that dreaded eye. It may be a superstition, but I was never yet thrown in her company without some misfortune happening ; consequently, as early as possible to-morrow, I leave you."

And she went. By the time the sun began to stretch long lines of light along the esplanade, my friend was far away ; and well it was, for before twelve o'clock in that day there came a ring at my door, and, with a face the colour of a sheet, my servant came to ask if I would see Miss Lily Vaughan.

It may have been cowardice, or it may have been caution, and moral cowards and moral heroines may settle it between themselves ; but all I know is, that I decidedly declined seeing Miss Lily Vaughan. Then

came a message : " Would I favour her with the address of the lady with whom I had been seen walking the previous day ? " Fortunately (as I thought) I did not know it, and I sent my pale-faced maid with a message to that effect, and to add that my friend was gone.

" Yes," was Miss Lily Vaughan's reply, in a cold, hard voice, looking daggers at my messenger ; " she knew that ; *she had seen her leave Rockingbourne by the 6.50 train.*"

Now, if my readers have gone through these pages, awed and impressed, I beseech them not to smile when I wind up the recital by declaring that, very soon after Miss Lily Vaughan had left my door, that pale-faced maid of mine was taken ill with what proved to be a long, tedious, and most dangerous attack, incomprehensible in character, and puzzling the doctors, who could give it no name but " gastric," their unfailing resource in obscure cases. Also that the letter I received ten days afterwards from my friend announced that she was only just recovering from spasms of the heart, which had well-nigh cost her her life. And for myself, unsettled by the story and the circumstances, I felt that Rockingbourne was no longer the place for my pleasure, and I left it—left it to Miss Lily Vaughan, the summer visitors all departed ; and for aught I know she walks there still, up and down, backwards and forwards, night and morning, and may walk there till the life that animates her shall ebb away, like those ceaseless tides on the strand of Rockingbourne, so that I see her no more, that lady with the Evil Eye.

The Ghost of Washleigh Court.

By GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA.

THE county of—well, I may safely call the province Oakshire—is full of antiquated dwelling-houses called “Courts.” The generic appellations given to the roomy, comfortable, old-fashioned mansions, rather too grand for the habitation of yeomen, and rather too humble for the houses of landed gentlemen, vary, as you know, in different counties. In Fenshire, for instance, they are named “Places;” in Heifershire, that great grazing county, they go by the name of “Granges;” whereas in Stotshire (which was always an aristocratic county) they are dignified with the somewhat too pretentious title of “Halls.”

There were many courts in Oakshire. There was Pawley Court—where I lived myself once, as a yearly tenant, and a curious time I had of it—Pigeon-cote Court, Hawksmoor Court, and at least a dozen others, once occupied, I imagine, by substantial colones (as Burton calls resident agriculturists) of gentle blood, not precisely squires, and having no manors to lord it over, but still living on their own freeholds, and sitting under their own fig-trees, with no man to make them afraid, and entitled (as the rudely-sculptured esccheons on their moss-grown tombstones prove) to wear coat-armour. Nowadays, when every cad grasps at a crest, and Mr. Threepercents, the enriched stocks-gambler, cheats the assessed taxes out of the sum he should pay for those armorial bearings,—to which he has no more right than I have to quarter the royal cognisance of England on my shield,—it seems strange, and almost absurd, for a simple cultivator, whose tranquil life is spent in rearing crops and selling them at the nearest market, to have been permitted to enjoy heraldic rank. But he did so, nevertheless, as the tombstones show; nor could he do it by mere arbitrary assumption; for the Heralds, you are aware, in their periodical visitations, had the right to go about with chisel, mallet, and tar-brush, to paint out false blazonry, and hack illegally-assumed achievements of arms out of tombstone and panel and lintel. Ah! Mr. Threepercents and Co., if the gentlemen from the Heralds College only went round, in our time, on their errand of inquisition, your signet-rings, and watch-seals, and plated dishes, and brougham-panels, would have, I fear, a sorry time of it.

The great Civil Wars disposed, in a very melancholy manner, of many of the gentle yeomen. The great Tritons of the king's party (such as the Marquis of Worcester), who lost their vast estates through adherence to the royal cause, were surrounded by innumerable minnows, whose few acres were pitilessly confiscated because they were loyal. Then the ugly modern feudal system grew up: there came to be only great land-holders, and

tenant farmers, and pinched labourers; and boroughs grew rotten, and poor-rates high, and cottages degenerated into pig-sties, and the gulf between the patrician and the yeoman and the peasant grew wider and wider every day. The old "Courts" of Oakshire passed into strange hands. Some of them fell into the occupation of clergymen; others subsided into schools; old maids and retired tradesmen took others; and many drifted into the hands of speculative house-agents, who let them at high rents during the summer months to London families who could not afford to keep up a country house all the year round.

In all Oakshire there was not a more thoroughly "old" looking house than Gashleigh Court. It was something else besides old. It was odd. Originally it had been constructed—on the ruins, most probably, of a far more ancient edifice—in the Elizabethan style, with porches, and bays and tall gables, and dormer casements, and carved corbels; but one of its many proprietors towards the time of James the Second—the transition period between Jones and Wren's classical beauty, and Kent and Vanbrugh's Ostrogothic ugliness—had rebuilt a considerable portion of the front in ponderous red brick with stone dressings. The garden, too, had been queerly "improved" in a hybrid manner, between the Dutch and the Italian styles; just as though you had popped a burgomaster's prize tulip into an Etruscan jar. Fortunately the mixture of styles did not quarrel; the usually conflicting periods agreed very well. The old armour and weapons and stags' horns on the walls of the hall seemed to shake hands with eighteenth-century china monsters, mandarin jars, and inlaid what-nots. The tapestry and the stained glass in the casements, which manifestly belonged to even an earlier Tudor time than imperious Eliza's, married, as the French art-critics put it, very pacifically with Japanese lacquered cabinets, a corner cupboard of Queen Anne's day, and a Georgian screen, with a whole aviary of birds and a menagerie of lions painted on leather.

But I am warned to hold my hand. 'Tis not my call just at present to quite give a *catalogue raisonné* of the contents of Gashleigh Court. Suffice it to say, that, inside and out, it was quaint, comfortable, and picturesque. In olden times it had a moat round it; but this had long since been filled up and laid out in parterres. Attached to the house, and quite encompassing it, were a few acres of land, too small for a chase, too big to be all used for pleasure-gardens. So, in one field potatoes grew, and in a second were strawberries, and a third was a paddock, and the fourth was nothing in particular, save a spacious expanse of somewhat rankly luxuriant, but very vivid, verdure.

I declare, upon my honour, I won't tease you any more with details architectural or horticultural. Gashleigh Court was in Oakshire, and within twenty miles of Paddington. You may go down yourself any day and inspect its site. You need not play long at hide and seek to discover where it formerly existed. Inquire sedulously between Windsor and Reading, and

you will learn. Only, I entreat you not to mistake Pawley Court, the wonderful old house by old Pawley church (the village is Chawley-cum-Pawley), for Gashleigh. They were two totally distinct mansions. Gashleigh, as I have hinted, used to have a moat round it, which was afterwards drained and planted; but in front of Pawley still spreads the thicket-covered lake fed by a stream from the little river Sprawl, which, after meandering through the grounds, falls in many a tiny skein, reticulating the marshy meadows, into the Thames near Datchet. Moreover, I explicitly pointed out that Gashleigh Court, as to its architecture, was a *pasticcio* of sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth century work; whereas Pawley Court, exteriorly, has differed very little from the appearance it presented in the reign of King Edward the Fourth.

At the time this petty history commences, Gashleigh Court had been unoccupied for a period of nearly ten years. There was a very good reason for its lacking tenants. The house was notoriously Haunted. I don't say that it was unmistakably so; for there is no department of human speculation in which mankind are apt to fall into such prodigious errors as about ghosts—the wind, the rats, the crickets, the woodpeckers, the owls, and the vain imaginings of the occupants themselves, being frequently converted, to the general satisfaction and the general horror, into phantoms of the first water; but as to the notoriety of Gashleigh Court's ghostliness, there could be no possible doubt. Every body, to begin with, said it was full of ghosts; and every body who ever entered the place, or had lived within half a mile's distance from it, had heard the dreadful noises which the ghosts made. For, again, every body was unanimous as to there being not one, but a plurality of ghosts.

Several parties—I mean families; but to the house-agent at Reading they were always “parties,” and most respectable ones—had tried to live at Gashleigh Court, but had given up the attempt, at last, in despair. A quiet life seemed really impossible of attainment there. The ghosts were not satisfied with making appalling appearances; the uproar they created was hideous, and all but incessant. Bedlam seemed to have broken loose at Gashleigh Court; and the getting up-stairs so graphically described by the Ethiopian lyrist was a most tame and monotonous proceeding compared with the furious races in which the ghosts indulged up and down the wide old oak staircase of Gashleigh Court.

The place belonged to a neighbouring nobleman,—a great lord of many manors,—who had at one time contemplated turning Gashleigh into a hunting-lodge,—a kind of Petit Trianon appurtenance to his superb palace hard by. He went to some expense in renovating and decorating the interior, and he slept there once or twice; but the ghosts soon drove him out. Nobody, in fact, could stand them. My lord's hunting friends had stout hearts, and were hard sleepers. They rode all day to the Queen's hounds, and did not neglect to push about the decanters at night; but the ghosts were too many and too much for them. Not a wink of sleep

could they get at Gashleigh; and the Honourable Reginald Cerfvolant, the most enthusiastic Nimrod of his day, frankly told my lord that he preferred a bed at the "Velvet Cap," the adjoining beer-shop, to the largest and stateliest of the four-posters at Gashleigh Court. "A fellow is bitten," he said naively, "at the beer-shop; but there ain't any bogies." The Honourable Reginald preferred fleas to phantoms.

In disgust, my lord took away the best of the old armour, tapestry, and porcelain to his own palace, and shut up Gashleigh Court. After a time he wearied of paying a housekeeper and gardener to take care of the unprofitable place, and instructed Mr. Bessemer, the Reading house-agent, to let the Court if he could. At first tenants were plentiful. A retired grocer, who wanted to enter the fine-old-English-gentleman line of business, took it. He and his family lived, or rather essayed to drag on a miserable existence there, for five months. They had rented Gashleigh for a two-years' term; but at the expiration of the first period I have named, they were glad to pay forfeit and fly from the horrible mansion. The ghosts had nearly driven them mad. Then an old gentleman, a widower, with a strong-minded lady as housekeeper, entered into possession. The very deuce himself was reported to be unable to frighten this old gentleman, who was suspected of having led a very wicked life, turned his children out of doors, and poisoned his wife. He was grimly facetious about the ghosts, at first, with the house-agent, and desired that they might be scheduled with the fixtures. He tried to swear the ghosts down, to drink them down, and at last to fight them down, firing off blunderbusses and pistols, and hacking at them with broadswords and billhooks whenever they made their appearance. But all was in vain. The strong-minded housekeeper took to shivering like an aspen, and having fits of hysterics; and at last the pair packed up, and departed with a benediction, addressed to the ghosts, the house-agent, and the lord of the manor, which sounded very much like a curse.

They were the last, for a long time, of the respectable, or at least of the solvent, tenants. The next was a schoolmaster. Three of his pupils became subject to epilepsy in consequence of the ghosts. The long-legged parlour-boarder from Jersey (to be sure he was of slightly weak intellect before he came to Gashleigh) tumbled down the oak staircase one morning after a ghostly interview, and fractured his skull; the gardener ran away with the spoons (of course prompted to this dishonest act by the ghosts); and on a certain moonlight night the cook went out into the kitchen-garden and hanged herself. No schoolmaster could stand this; and the despairing tenant took an early opportunity of absconding. He didn't pay the butcher or the baker before he left, and there were three quarters' rent in arrear. It was all the fault of the ghosts, of course.

Captain Tiffany, the next tenant, was a swindler, and nothing more. He professed to like ghosts, and said they were very jolly. He tried to

overpower them by numbers, bringing a rout of roistering companions, male and female, down from London, and striving to drown the supernatural noises in the yells of a continual carousal. The house-agent, however, could not get a penny from him as rent; and the captain so scandalised the quiet neighbourhood by his unseemly merriment and naughty associates, that they were glad at last to give him a receipt in full of all demands, and twenty pounds to go away.

I pass over the two mad old maids, who played duets on a harpsichord all day to conciliate the spirits, and were supposed to have even brought an additional stock of ghosts with them. One of them died at Gashleigh, raving about apparitions; and the other was removed to the Oaks County Lunatic Asylum.

In a brief sentence, also, I will dismiss Lieutenant Groggram, H.P., of the Royal Navy, who was periodically attacked with *delirium tremens*, and saw many ghosts during his stay; although *his* phantoms appeared to have a preference for assuming the guise of guinea-pigs and rats continually chasing each other round the room, rather than traditional and (on multifarious evidence) authenticated semblance of the Gashleigh ghost.

Eventually, even the house-agent gave up the idea of letting Gashleigh, as a bad job. The place was bolted and barred up, and abandoned, in fee-simple, to the ghosts and the rats. Every spring Mr. Bessemer inserted a single advertisement in the *Oaks Express*, stating that all that desirable messuage and tenement called Gashleigh Court was to be let to an eligible tenant; but the evil renown of the Court had spread far and wide, and eligible tenants who read the advertisement were accustomed to lay their forefingers by the side of their noses in an ironical manner, and to observe, that they were very much obliged to Mr. Bessemer, but that they had no desire to be frightened out of their wits.

One morning—it was the eleventh anniversary of the insertion of the solitary and hopeless advertisement in the *Oaks Express*—Mr. Bessemer (a cheerful house-agent at most times) was sitting somewhat disconsolately in his back office, wondering whether he should ever receive another commission for letting Gashleigh Court, and whether, after all, it would not be better to advise my lord to blow it up with gunpowder, and so get rid of it for ever.

“A fire,” gloomily mused Mr. Bessemer, “might do some good; but who knows? the ghosts may be insured, and the Office insist on replacing them. My lord might pull down the place, and sell what remains of the oak-carvings, and stained-glass, and armour, and things, to the curiosity-shops in Wardour Street; but if he built a new house there, the ghosts would be sure to haunt it. No, no; blow it up, grub up the foundations, and sow it with turnips and vetches. I never heard of a haunted mangold-wurzel yet. Turnips, to be sure, might be dangerous. When I was a boy we used to scoop out turnips to make ghosts’ heads of; and the Gashleigh ghosts might take to the turnips in earnest.”

At this juncture Phipkins, Mr. Bessemer's apprentice—articled pupil rather—stumbled into the back office. His face was very pale; his knees knocked together, and his eyes wore an expression of terror and amazement combined.

"If you please, sir," quavered Phipkins, "there's a gent in the front wants a card to view Gashleigh Court; and he says he'd take it without looking, 'cause of the ghosts, which is meat and drink to him."

"Bless my soul!" cried the house-agent, bustling about, and rummaging nervously in his drawer for a card of admission; "this is very strange. What sort of a gentleman is it, Phipkins?"

"If you please, sir," replied the articled pupil, his voice subsiding to a hiss, "*he looks like a ghost himself!*"

Mr. Bessemer bade his subordinate inform the gentleman, with his compliments, that he would be with him in one moment, and proceeded to fill up an order addressed to old Bannup, who kept the "Velvet Cap" beer-shop, and in whose care the huge rusty keys of Gashleigh Court were left.

"Ghosts are meat and drink to him, are they?" mused Mr. Bessemer; "egad, he'll have enough of them up at the Court. By the way, didn't that swindling captain say that he liked ghosts? This may be one of the same sort. Ah, we must be cautious, very cautious."

With this he proceeded into the front office, where he found, sitting on his great lease, renewal, and agreement strewn table, a gentleman swinging his legs to and fro in a very free and easy manner.

He was a long gentlemen, and a bony one. Larger feet and larger hands, with larger knuckles at the finger-joints thereof, Mr. Bessemer had seldom seen. He wore no gloves, and it seemed only by a condescension to the usages of society that he wore boots. He was clad, generally, in nankeen, and his lank straight black hair was surmounted by a straw hat encircled with a black ribbon. In one hand he poised a big stick. In the other he had a big cigar. His face was of the colour of mahogany, with inlayings of bird's-eye maple on the cheek-bones. He had no whiskers, but a straggling, stubby, hirsute appendage to his chin, half-tuft and half-beard. On two or three of his knuckles, by the way, Mr. Bessemer observed that there glistened diamond rings of large size. Studs of the same precious gems glittered on his shirt-front, which was otherwise coarse, creased, and not too clean. His collar was enormous, and might have been called a "lay-down," had it not been equally a "stick-out" one. A Windsor Guide protruded from his coat-pocket; he smelt very strongly of tobacco; and, altogether, he was a very strange-looking gentleman indeed.

"I wish he wouldn't spit so on my kamptulicon," murmured Mr. Bessemer, remarking the expectoratory attentions which the gentleman had been paying (in a circular form) to the india-rubber flooring of the office.

"Cunnel Pyke," said the gentleman, handing him a card, on which the house-agent read as follows :

Colonel Shephathiah P. Pyke,

U.S.A.

"Shephathiah I was baptised," continued the long gentleman, "my folks bein' pious; and father jined a chutch the fall but one before I upriz, startlin'. What P. stands for, I dunno. Punkins, mebbe; but am nut suttin'. It was a throw-in, shiffly, to please the pusson; but P. I be. From Massachusetts. Ask for Colonel Shephathiah P. Pyke; for morality and dry-goods unekalled, and payin' his way to the last cent, now retired, and from hum three years, travelling on the continent of Europe."

Mr. Bessemer bowed.

"Yes, sir," went on Colonel Pyke. "And that's how I cum here,—meanin' also my family, which is along of me and refreshing at your adjacent tavern, the 'White Hart.' Sir, you hev hud of W. Shakespeare, of Stratford-on-Avon, Warwickshire?"

Mr. Bessemer replied that he had heard of the bard in question.

"Also of W. Milton, of Cripplegate, London?"

Yes, Mr. Bessemer had heard of him; but he didn't exactly see—

"Of course you don't," the Colonel interposed, waving his hand in a lofty manner. "Sir, W. Shakespeare was my uncle: J. Milton, of Cripplegate, London; W. Spenser, of Kilcolman Castle, Ireland; J. Addison, of Holland House, Kensington; J. Dryden, of Gerrard Street, Soho; A. Pope, of Twickenham, Middlesex,—were my brothers. Your language, your literature, your fine arts, your philosophy, your oratory, belong to us: some. Sir, in an intellectual pint of view, I consider Lady Mary Wortley Montagu to be my grandmother. My fut, sir, in this country, is on my native heath; and in Herne's Oak, Datchet Mead, mine host of the Garter, and the lofty keep of Windsor Castle itself, I have a common property."

The house-agent began to think that a madman had paid him a morning call; and, indeed, in the royal borough of Windsor it is no uncommon circumstance for a demented person to turn up, possessed with the monomaniacal notion that Windsor Castle is his or her property, or that he or she is the rightful sovereign of England.

Colonel Pyke appeared to comprehend, from the scared look of the house-agent, that he was talking Chaldee to him.

Taking pity on the house-agent's bewilderment, the Colonel condescended to come down from the giddy heights of metaphor to the

champaign country of common sense. He proceeded to inform Mr. Bessemer that, tired of roaming about the continent of Europe, he was desirous of fixing himself for a while in a rural district of England. He liked Oakshire; he liked the neighbourhood of Windsor; he had studied the exterior of Gashleigh Court, and liked that too; and he was prepared to become a tenant, with his family, of the haunted mansion for one year certain.

Mr. Bessemer, on behalf of the lord of the manor, desired nothing better. The necessary inquiries were made. The undoubted respectability of Colonel Pyke was ascertained. His name, it was found, stood very highly, numerically speaking, in the books of Messrs. George Peabody and Co. (all blessings on the head of the firm!); and Mr. Bessemer only regretted that the American stranger was not desirous of renting a park and five hundred acres, instead of the confined messuage of Gashleigh Court.

In due time the Pykes took possession. There was the Colonel himself, as he has been introduced to you. There was Mrs. Colonel Pyke, a lady who had been a beauty. She read novels, had amber hair, and dressed habitually in sky-blue muslin. The Colonel, who adored her, admitted that, although a lovely woman, she was limp. "She wants rosinin' up," he was used to say; "she wants clear-starchin', and that's a fact."

Mr. Washington Tubalcain Jefferson Pyke, the Colonel's only son, was a prodigious dandy. He wore a beard that a sapper might have envied, and abounded in malachite studs and coral waistcoat-buttons. When he rode to the Queen's hounds, in a cap of purple plush, a sealskin-coat, jack-boots of sticking-plaster leather, and mounted on a towering black mare with a silver surcingle, he rather astonished the gentlemen of that hunt, I promise you. He drove a species of light mail-phæton, with two fast trotters, and which he called his "wagon" about the neighbourhood, and overawed the countryside. The Grand-Duke of Saxe Maïtrank, staying at the Castle, and who was always coming to grief with his dog-cart, was jealous of him. Washington Tubalcain Jefferson Pyke knew the Grand-Duke very well. They had been fellow-students at Bonn together. Before his Pomposity of Saxe Maïtrank came into the title,—the business, as the Colonel called it,—he had seen a little service in the Austrian army; and the heir of the Pykes had been *attaché* to the U. S. Legation at Vienna when Heinrich Max XLVIII., as a captain of Uhlans, was in garrison there. Young Mr. Pyke averred that he had loaned his Pomposity many a ten-florin bill during his minority. "They ain't grateful, those Eurōpean sovereigns," he said. He wondered that he had never been invited to dine at the Castle.

There were two Miss Pykes,—enchancing creatures, beautiful as the May morn,—who sang duets. Was there any thing else they could do? Well, it is irrational to expect any American young ladies to do much more. It is even a condescendence in them to sing. They are generally

so pretty, that to take care of their beauty, and to display it to the best advantage, naturally absorb the best part of their time. But the Miss Pykes *could* do something more. They were adepts in the graceful exercise of the rocking-chair. Miss Alethea, the eldest, had a pretty turn for entomology, and had formed a wonderful collection of cosmopolitan beetles; and Miss Eudoxia Pyke, a sylph-like little thing, who looked as though you could have blown her away, was a dead-shot with the six-shooter, and was the cause of much wailing among numerous colonies of blackbirds in the thickets round the Court.

Such was the Pyke family. Its domesticity was completed by three retainers. First came Doctor Narcissus Hodge, Doctor of Philosophy, and sometime lecturer on *belles-lettres* in the University of Gougeville, Ga. He was a mild, pink little man, with a turn-down collar and spectacles; very like, on the whole, a sprig of May. His appearance was deceptive; for, apparently about twenty-six, he was, in reality, on the shady side of forty. The Doctor was a distant relation of the Pykes, and had come a "cousining;" that is, to pay a fortnight's visit,—long since, when the family occupied a villa on the banks of the Hudson. First he stayed fourteen days, and then he stayed eleven years. But he was always going away for good next fall. Nobody wanted him to go; for he was amiable and merry and wise. He collected beetles for Alethea, and loaded the six-shooter for Eudoxia; cut the leaves of Mrs. Pyke's novels, and was the exclusive possessor of two inimitable recipes for drying cigars and compounding mint-julep, which rendered him invaluable to the Colonel. Both he and his host were in hazy uncertainty as to whether Dr. Narcissus Hodge ought to be considered a friend, a butler, a secretary, a librarian, or a steward. There was one attribute, however, which could not be fixed upon him. He was not a toady.

Old Mrs. Van Mutch (the decayed descendant of a Dutch family long settled in New York) was cook, housekeeper, lady's-maid, nurse, and general tyrant to the establishment. She had dandled the Colonel in her arms as a baby, and, as she naively expressed it, had "spanked" him many a time. She had made Mrs. Pyke's bridal dress, and was anxious to make those of the young ladies. She had travelled all over the continent of Europe and a good part of Asia with her patrons, when they went "a-touristing,"—by which name Colonel Pyke qualified foreign travel; and for every city save New York, and every people save the Americans, Mrs. Van Mutch habitually professed supreme and unmitigated contempt. "Sirree," she was wont to explain, snapping her fingers, "not one of 'em's wuth the rind of a punkin."

Finally was there Abdiel Kickeray, aged fifty, who was a Negro, and was called a "boy." He was free, of course; but he had been a slave to Mrs. Pyke's parents, who were Southern folks. He liked Northern folks, his master excepted, little; he liked Northern Negroes less. He called the Anti-Slavery Society a set of "dam bobolitionists." He would very gladly have put his head into prussic-acid, or his feet into boiling pitch,

had the slightest wish to that effect been expressed by any member of the family. His fidelity was indomitable, his love for the Pykes inextinguishable; but he was perhaps the biggest liar that you could hope to find out of a bushel of telegram-writers. And it was as well to keep the pots of preserves and the sugar-basins in his neighbourhood under lock and key, otherwise Abdiel Kickeray, for shortness called Abe, was given to stealing their contents.

The family was in due time installed at Gashleigh Court, and did their best to be neighbourly. I am sorry to say that they did not at first succeed. The medical man called; but the Pykes informed him they were homœopathists, and that Dr. Narcissus Hodge had exclusive control over the medicine-chest and the infinitesimal globules. The clergyman paid a visit of ceremony; but the Colonel said that he and his family were dissenters. Questioned as to what denomination he belonged to—there were the chapels of about twenty nonconforming sects in the vicinage at his service—he replied, for self and household, that they were “peculiar Christians.”

“Meanin’ that me and my sun sometimes plays quoits on Sundays,” he explained, “and that Dr. Narcissus Hodge doesn’t let the beetles alone on that day, nor my gals the pianner. It’s awful wicked, I know; but we are peculiar. Mrs. Pyke, she is pious, and, having nuvs, keeps her room. When I was to hum, I concluded to set a big dog at a pusion whenever I see him comin’ across my purlieus; but such ain’t civil in Europe, and I gives ‘em a quiet answer. But if you want any money for your poor folks, a five-guinea bill” (the name given by the Colonel to a five-pound Bank-of-England note) “is always at your suvvice.”

The clergyman did not come again for a long time.

This candid avowal, with some other circumstances, were the means of earning for the Pyke family something very nearly approaching a bad name. The local cook, too, who had been hired to assist Mrs. Van Mutch, rebelled against that ancient dame’s tyranny, and called the hot cakes, Johnny cakes, dough-nuts, and pumpkin-pies, on which the Pykes loved to regale themselves, nasty messes. Mr. Washington Tubalcain Jefferson Pyke also was given to sitting on the gate of the demesne, which skirted the high road to Datchet, in his shirt-sleeves, and with a Panama-straw hat on, singing such unpolished Negro melodies as “Gwine ober de mountain,” “You dar, Sambo?” “O Mr. Coon, you come too soon!” and “It’ll nebber do to gib it up so, Massa Brown;” accompanying himself on the banjo or the tambourine. Sometimes he performed on the bones, to the infinite scandal of the genteel promenaders in Gashleigh Lane. Then a rumour ran through the village that Miss Eudoxia Pyke, the Diana of the six-shooter, had shot a robin-redbreast. She was looked upon with horror in consequence. The rustics would have been more horrified had they known that in her childhood, in the United States, Miss Eudoxia had, in all probability, *eaten* many “robins upon toast.” Finally, all the servants at Gashleigh Court filled the beer-shop, the baker’s, the butcher’s,

and other gossiping places of the village, with horrifying stories of the Pykes' addictedness to spiritualism. Not content with the traditional bogies of the place, they imported strange spirits of their own; and this the natives (Gashleigh was a most conservative village) bitterly resented. They began to hate the Pykes as intruders, as aliens, as "furriners;" "them Merrykans," they opined, "was never no good." In process of time, however, the kindly, simple manners of the good Yankee folks at the Court disarmed these transient animosities. Their charities were almost boundless. The Colonel was a walking dispensary of tobacco and snuff for old people given to narcotic indulgences, and of sweetstuff for the children, who used to follow him in the village street, and call him Daddy Toffy. Dr. Narcissus Hodge compounded cordial drinks for bed-ridden old women, which they declared to be "blessed things for the innards." Mrs. Van Mutch, by direction of Mrs. Pyke, gave away hot soup twice a week at the gate to all who brought jugs. The young ladies' voluminous flounced skirts and plumed hats were continually seen sweeping in and out of the poorest hovels in the hamlet; nor were they above carrying bottles of port-wine, parcels of tea and sugar, and rolls of flannel, to the poor and miserable. And as for young Mr. Washington Tubalcain Jefferson Pyke, although his charity was somewhat of the indiscriminating order, he was never tired of flinging shillings to beggar-boys and weary-footed tramps, or standing "drinks" all round to clay-stained peasants coming from their toil.

So by degrees the country-side came round, and the Pykes grew into favour with the inhabitants. The poor began to love them; the neighbourhood—and it was a very high and mighty neighbourhood in its own estimation—would have vouchsafed to patronise them; until they discovered that the Pykes were the rather accustomed to be looked up to than to be looked down upon. More than one great nobleman, and more than one noble lady too,—invited guests at the great Castle,—drove over to Gashleigh to visit the Colonel and his family, whom they had met in the highest society on the Continent, and from whom they had received courtesy and hospitality. The high and mighty neighbourhood was stricken dumb by these occurrences, and then, recovering itself, poured an avalanche of visiting-cards on the Pykes.

But how had the ghosts been comporting themselves all this time? Alas, for the skeleton in the wine-cup, for the thorn about the rose! The ghosts were as virulent as ever; they obstinately refused to be laid in the Red Sea. Colonel Pyke had thought to vanquish them by competition; and Dr. Narcissus Hodge, who was an accomplished rapper, summoned up successively the spirits of Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander the Great, Pythagoras, Aaron Burr, and Paul Jones, and conferred with them; but the ghosts' noises drowned the rapping, and even smothered the reverberation of young Mr. Pyke's tambourine, the twanging of his banjo, and the clacking of his bones. Dr. Hodge consulted the spirits as to whether they knew any thing of the Gashleigh ghosts. Their replies were vague,

evasive, and not altogether polite. Nebuchadnezzar said, in the English language (which was of course the vernacular in use down Babylon way), that "he would be blown before he said any thing;" Pythagoras (who would seem to have been a Scottish spirit) cautiously inquired, "What'll ye gie?" the spirit of Aaron Burr rudely informed the company that they might all go and be somethinged; and nothing could be rapped out of Paul Jones but the mysterious and unsatisfactory word, "Bobsconce."

The Colonel's year of tenancy came to an end, and he went over to Windsor to pay Mr. Bessemer the last quarter's rent.

"'Tis an uncommon purty location," he remarked, "and shutes us all remukkable. The beetles is as abounding as pea-nuts at the Bowery; and my youngest gal's life is a halcyon time in shootin' small buds. But I'm fiffle that we can't stand them darned ghosts."

"Have they—have the noises," Mr. Bessemer remarked nervously, but cautiously (not liking to run down the value of the property by admitting the existence of ghosts), "been very troublesome?"

"Troublesome!" echoed Colonel Pyke. "Is rattlesnakes in your boots troublesome? Is muskitters in your flannel vest troublesome? Is Hessian flies heavenly to heifers? Troublesome, sir! The darned things have worrited Mrs. P.'s nuvs to fiddlestrings. They have druv my gals half melancholy mad. Dr. Narcissus Hodge, he can't get up no more spirits for 'em. My son has 'em all about him, like May-bugs. And though I don't care a cent for any ghost as was ever raised, I find myself a goin' off my feed, and a goin' on my drink, and a turnin' right down hypochondriacal-like."

"What—what are the noises like?" Mr. Bessemer asked tentatively.

"Two sorts," replied the Colonel laconically: "there's a sharp banging noise like blows, as if some one was a cowhidin' somebody. It goes on, hour after hour; whack, whack, whack, till yer marrer turns to ice-cream; and then comes the other noise,—low, dismal, plaintive, skeary moans, as of a child—poor little innocent!—that's a bein' weltd."

"Any words?" asked the house-agent.

"We never heard but these," replied the Colonel, in a low tone; "but all of us have heard 'em in a kind of agony whisper close to our ears at some time or other: '*Ho, don't, mother; don't.*'"

"Dear me!" cried the house-agent, as though he had not heard the tale five hundred times before.

"That's all we hear," went on Colonel Pyke; "and sometimes it comes at night, and sometimes it comes by day. But what's all that to the things we see?"

"See!"

"Yes, sir, see. I've seen 'em; my wife's seen 'em; the gals has seen 'em; so has my son; so has Doctor Hodge; so has the nigger boy Abe; so has Mrs. Van Mutch—seen 'em and heard 'em too, although she's half deaf and three-parts blind."

"What are they—what do they seem to be like?"

"They're awful, sir," the Colonel responded, sinking his voice still lower, and lighting a fresh cigar; for his eccentricities being known, he was always permitted to smoke in the house-agent's office. "There are two on 'em, sir; but they're never seen together. There's a tall handsome lady in a night-dress, and her hair hanging down, for all the world like Lady Macbeth, and she seems to hold something like the shadow of a stick or a switch in her hand. She's generally to be seen gliding up and down the great staircase. Then there's another: a poor, pale, delicate-looking lad, in little loose pants, and blue rosettes in his shoes, and a point-lace collar. But there seems to be stains of ink and stains of blood on his hands, and his face, and his collar, and the paper on which he is writing, always writing, at a little table in the bay-window of the hall; but there ain't no real table there; it's a phantom table, sir, *and it's all over Blood.*"

No amount of persuasion could persuade Colonel Pyke to remain at Gashleigh Court. The offer was made for him to take it at a reduced rate; but he said that Mrs. P.'s "nuvs," or nerves, couldn't stand the racket, and that he had had a bellyful of ghosts, which would last him for the term of his natural life. He went away, and the family resumed their wanderings up and down the earth. They are now, I believe, domiciliated in the neighbourhood of Simpheropol in the Crimea, where they grow capital champagne grapes, are much respected by the neighbouring Tartars, and enjoy themselves like jovial, kind-hearted cosmopolitans as they are.

With the Pyke occupancy ended the last attempt to let Gashleigh Court. My lord, in profound disgust with his haunted property, sold the whole concern, stock, lock, and barrel, to the Ultra-Democratic and Universally Philanthropic Freehold Land and Building Society; and the directors thereof proceeded to lay out the demesne of Gashleigh, and some contiguous acres, in compact building-lots.

Gashleigh Court came down last year. The workmen had a hard job to demolish it; for the old house was very tough, and the joists and roof-tree of the hardest Spanish chestnut. To fragments, however, it came at last. The building materials were sold in lots; but the place "stripped," to use the technical term, most remuneratively, and portions of the windows, the panelling, and the carved mantel-pieces of Gashleigh Court, found their way in due time into some of the most aristocratic and expensive "ruination shops" in the Strand, Holborn, and Piccadilly.

While they were dismantling the bay-window of the great hall, the workmen happened to notice that in the sill was fitted a kind of deep narrow chest or locker. It was securely nailed down; but at last they managed to raise the lid, which was on hinges, towards the window. The locker appeared to be crammed full of earth and stones; but removing these the workmen found, at a depth of about two feet, a mass of papers,—manuscript books stripped of their covers, and which seemed to

have been schoolboys' copy-books of very old date. The pattern handwriting at the head of the copies was angular, crabbed, but bold and symmetrical; the imitations beneath were most lamentable pothooks and hangers—the feeblest and most staggering of childish scrawls. There were at least twenty of these books; *but every page of every one of them was discoloured by dusky smears and blots.* Mr. Snape, the surgeon of the village, took occasion to examine these smeared and blotted manuscripts attentively. He even subjected them to the test of the microscope. He gave it as his opinion that most of the discolorations arose from blots of ink, from which the original hue had long since faded. But there were several darker, browner spots about the copy-books, and these Mr. Snape authoritatively declared were neither more nor less than spots of Human Blood.

And now I feel slightly in a difficulty. My memory (seldom very trustworthy) has suddenly failed me in two most essential particulars. I can remember the occurrence, but I can't recollect when it is said to have occurred, or whereabouts I saw it narrated. I am completely at sea as to time and place. Was it in King James's time, or in Queen Anne's? Was it in King Charles's, the First or the Second? Did I find the story in one of those ponderous tomes of County History which cumber the lower shelves of the Library of Reference in the British Museum Reading-room? or did I stumble across it in an old volume of the *Mirror*—in *God's Revenge against Murder*—in a collection of antiquated newspaper cuttings—in the back number of a defunct magazine—or where? Treacherous memory, what a trick thou hast served me!

At all events, there is an unnumbered, unknown closet in my head, from which I draw a skeleton with yellow bones and grinning skull; and I remember me that I have read this: That hundreds of years ago—under what king or queen I know not, but in days when gentlefolks wore point-lace collars, rosettes in their shoes, and rapiers at their sides, and gentlewomen kirtles and farthingales—there dwelt in a certain Court—even then old fashioned—in an English shire a Lady Barbara Livingstone. Her lord, a stately knight of long line, practised in all courtly arts and martial exercises, and much beloved by his prince, had been for years in Italy, Resident from the English Crown to the Most Serene Republic of Venice. That even if his Embassy came to an end, it was not within likelihood that he would return to the Court, for that the Lady Barbara and he pulled not well together. "*Duro con duro*," says the Italian proverb, "*non mai fan muro*." He was haughty, and she was haughty; both had an evil temper, and so concluded that the wisest thing they could do, to avoid the scandal of unseemly broils ending in a public separation, was to live apart. That the Lady Barbara had an only child—a delicate boy with fair hair, for whom she entertained much stern love, but reared him nevertheless with exceeding and unvarying harshness, oftentimes correcting him not only with reproofs and child-

ings, but with blows and stripes. That she so reared him till he was nine years of age. That the boy, though quick and dexterous at most of the sports of his age, and besides of a ready wit and playful fancy, was at mere book-learning a hopeless dullard. That his mother, the stern Lady Barbara, declared his dullness to be obstinacy; would often push away Mr. Marrable (the child's tutor), who was likewise her chaplain, saying that he was too gentle with the dunce, and that she would show him how so wilful and headstrong a colt should be broken in; and would thereupon scourge him cruelly. That she often beat the child till he bled. That his principal fault in learning was in his writing; and that neither threats nor punishment could cure him of besmearing his copies with inky blots. That one fatal November night his mother, who had kept him writing, writing, writing, at a little table in the bay-window of the great hall, without food or respite for many weary hours—to the plentiful down-falling of tears, and, alas, of ink-blots on his copy-books—declared, that if he were kept there till morning dawned, he should produce a page of handwriting free from blots; and that she would cure him of his slovenliness, or Kill him. That she set him a copy and went to bed. That she came in an hour's time in her nightrail down the great oak staircase, and found the boy crying over his task, which, woe! was full of blots. That, with a stick or switch, often used for that dreadful purpose, she beat him mercilessly. That she so came down, so found him full of tears and ink, and so beat him, *eleven times* during that night. That all the boy said, between his plaintive moans, was, "Don't, mother; don't!" That, at cock-crow, when for the twelfth time she had come down, and was again about to beat the child, Mr. Marrable, the chaplain, who had been waked from his bed by the victim's moans, rushed from his hiding place, and, wrenching the rod from her hand, cried, "Woman, for JESUS' sake, for His sake that was scourged, forbear, and stay thy bloody hand!" But that it was too late, for that the little lad lay at her feet quite still and motionless; and that guileless tormented spirit had found peace. That she cried out in a dreadful voice, "He is Dead, and I am Mad!" and that she did indeed become distraught, and so raved until her dying day; and that her lord coming home from Venice wept many bitter tears over the boy's grave, but would never look more upon the face of his lady, to whom he gave a name such as was given to Cain. But that who put the tear-bedewed, blood-stained copy-books into the locker by the window-sill (unless indeed it was the Reverend Mr. Marrable, in his perturbation to hush the matter up, and hide all evidence of the dismal deed), was never known.

This is the story I read, but I cannot remember where. It does not matter now. The demesne of Gashleigh is a most eligible site, and will ere long be covered with semi-detached villas, designed by the Architect-in-ordinary to the Ultra-Democratic and Universally Philanthropic Freehold Land and Building Society.

Alured : an Allegory.

By FRANCES POWER COBBE.

UNDER the shadows of grand old trees, in the varying light and shade of an English summer's day, a young man paced moodily.

"I will break this avenue," he thought. "I abhor this monotony of height and size and foliage. Uniformity is unnatural, and therefore for ever hideous. Nature never makes trees grow in lines in the virgin forest, or mountain chains straight-topped like walls. It is our tyrant taste which plays with the woods as despots do with their soldiers; and our miserable artificial civilization which brings about the still worse monotony of human society. O these men and women who surround me! Shall I ever reconcile myself to their dull conventional talk, their colourless characters, the endless sameness of their pursuits and ideas? The men are bad enough; but their monotony is now and then disturbed by some passion—good or evil, ambition or hatred, wine or women, the racecourse or the gaming-table. But the women, these high-born and well-trained dames, my mother brings round me, hoping to find me willing to chain myself to one of their dead souls for life. What empty shows and mere spectres of real women they are!—of women such as Shakespeare drew, or Titian and Praxiteles saw in their dreams! These women, with their paltry forms, their flimsy minds, their shallow hearts—who can talk of love to such beings? And they are all alike, as if cast in one common mould. What one of them thinks, another thinks; what one says, another says; what one feels, another feels. If they ever had a spark of fire in their earthy natures it was extinguished in their childhood. Only one woman did I ever know—my poor, lost Angela—who had will, and power, and thought, worthy to be loved and honoured. Would that she had lived! Would that I had loved her better while yet she might have been my wife! O would that I could find a being whom I could wholly, perfectly love!—one whose thoughts should lift me up to nobler life—whose beauty should, like those of the old Greek statues, fill my heart with the rapture of their deep repose—one whose love should be my glory and my joy, and for whose dear sake I might yet become a man among men, and strike a blow in the great battle of the Right and the True. Could I find such a woman as *this*, methinks this rust of life would be brushed off, and my soul would leap forth as a sword from its sheath. I could love such a

woman—surely I could love her—as man never loved before. Let me but find my Ideal, and my mother shall weep no more over my lonely, embittered, and inglorious life. A new existence should begin for me then.”

Alured had wandered on deep into the forest, and stood still at last in an open space where a small conical hill seemed to testify to Druid handiwork. The thick trees shut it in round its base, and for miles away there was the silence of the woodland solitude, broken only by the cawing of the rooks, and the hum of summer insects, and the rustle of the hare in the fern. Looking upward at the mound as he stood at its foot, Alured was startled to behold a figure standing on the small green space on the summit, and looking down on him earnestly. The more he gazed the greater grew his astonishment and wonder. It was a grand, majestic form which he beheld—

“A daughter of the gods divinely tall
And most divinely fair”—

the limbs and bust, noble as those of the Venus of Milo; but the face, rather wearing the soft beauty, the ineffable calm, sad smile of the Psyche of Praxiteles. Was it a lady of mortal mould before him? Alured could not tell; hitherto he had seen such a form only in his dreams, or in the marble of the mighty sculptors of old. Over her limbs and broad, high bosom flowed the folds of a white robe, so pure that it glistened in the sun, and her hair hung in rich masses, like the ripples of a golden river, from her shoulders almost to the ground. But there was yet more—somewhat which made Alured’s heart stand still with the awful sense of beholding the superhuman and divine. Over the high brow, and seeming to rest on the rolling locks of gold, there was a gleam—a shimmer as of a light—a star which needed but the coming of twilight to shine out in fuller radiance. Alured could not speak. He stood still with his hands clasped, then slowly, reverently, ascended the mound towards her. At last, when he had approached her nearly, and her godlike beauty broke in full upon his heart, he sank upon his knees and lifted to her his face, pale with wonder and adoration.

Hours passed away, and the sun went down over the forest, and the twilight came, and the nightingale sang, and still the lady sat on the Druids’ Mound, and Alured lay at her feet. The lady smiled on him, yet with somewhat solemn in her smile, and spoke to him in a low, soft voice, which seemed, in some unknown way, to thrill him like a voice recalled in the memory of childhood. Alured spoke to her of all he had longed for and dreamed, and the lady answered him with words of sympathy, and noble counsels of faith and virtue. And she spoke to him of other worlds higher and holier than this, and of the light of

unknown suns, and the radiance of moons unseen by human eyes ; and of flowers, whose beauty and fragrance gave even the immortals joy. And Alured's heart beat fast, for he felt she spoke of such things as one who had known them. Then she spoke again, and told him of the mighty dead ; of Plato, beside whom she had wandered in odoriferous groves, where the olives of the Academe were remembered ; of Antoninus, whose kingly soul had been her guide ; of "starry Galileo," whose solemn face she had seen lighten with a smile, telling how he had striven to behold through his glass the world where now he dwelt. Then she spoke of duty, and of the eternal right ; of things which hold true in every world for ever ; and of that great LOVE in which all creatures live and move throughout a boundless universe.

And Alured bent lower and lower, and bowed his head and said :

"O, lady ! I am not worthy to be near thee, or to speak to thee. Bid me depart, and die."

And the lady answered, and said :

"Not so, O my friend ! I have sought thee, and come to thee from afar."

And Alured took the hem of her garment and kissed it, and buried his face in the grass. And the lady remained silent ; and the nightingale sang in the wood. Then the young man lifted up his eyes and looked at the lady. And behold ! the star on her head shone out now in the evening gloom with the mild radiance of Hesperus, and she sat still with the star gleaming over her, like the statue of a holy saint.

And Alured was afraid of the star, and yet he loved it as a crown on the head of his beloved, and he said :

"Lady, tell me thy name, and how shall I call thee ?"

And the lady answered and said :

"Call me Stella, for thou fearest my star : and thou shalt not fear, but only love."

And the lady lifted her hand, and drew a tress of her hair over the star, and the star was veiled in a golden mist.

"But thou sayest thou wilt leave me, Stella," said Alured. "Thou wilt return to thy home, far off, and forget me ;" and Alured wept like a boy.

And the lady answered, and said :

"I go, dear Alured, but also I return, if so thou wilt it should be. See how the moon rises full-orbed, to-night, behind the trees. When she rises again in her full glory, I shall be here, on this old mound amid the woods again. Wilt thou meet me, Alured, my friend ?"

And Alured swore he would meet her, were rivers of fire in his path ; and the lady smiled softly, and slowly and gently arose, and passed away into the dark green depths of the forest.

Then Alured awoke as from a dream, and sped him homeward to

his castle : but his heart and thoughts were with the lady of the forest, and he answered his aged mother as if he heard not her voice, and refused to see his companions and friends, and spent his days in roaming alone through the great lonely woods.

And when the time of the full moon was come, he hastened to the Druids' Mound, while his heart beat wildly with fear and hope.

And the moon rose at midnight, and there was a tempest in the woods, and the trees rocked and crashed in the autumn gale, and the sere leaves fled before the storm, and the birds shrieked with terror. At last the moon shone out between the black rolling clouds, and tipped their borders with silver, and, through the rift, from the depth of the dark blue of heaven the stars shone down like the eyes of God unveiled.

And Stella and Alured walked together in the forest. And the soul of the young man swelled within him as the storm beat on his brow, and the freshness of the autumn night quickened his blood. And he wooed Stella with all the passion of his soul, and told her how he had longed for one who should be above and beyond the women of earth, who should not think their thoughts, nor speak their words, nor wear their false looks. And he told her how her stately grace and matchless beauty entranced him, but how her mind and soul called forth still deeper homage from his heart, and how to call her his own, his wife, was the highest ambition he should ever know.

Stella looked at him as he spoke, and smiled lovingly on him and said :

"Alured, in thy dreams thou didst long for a woman not of earth—a woman of larger, nobler soul than thy kindred, of higher gifts and of mightier love ; but, Alured, deceive not thyself, deceive not me. Dost thou indeed desire me—such as I am—to be the wife of thy bosom, the companion of thy brightest as well as of thy gravest hours ?"

Then Alured arose, and the moon shone on his brow, and his eye flashed brightly, and he said :

"Ay, Stella ! I desire to have thee to be the friend of my life, the wife of my heart, the companion, witness, guide, of every step of my earthly way."

"Be it so then, Alured," said Stella ; "I will be thy wife."

And Alured took that star-crowned form in his arms, and kissed the lips which had tasted of the wine of heaven ; and Alured fell senseless on the Druids' Mound, and lay without thought or motion.

In a fair chamber of a stately house Alured sat alone by the autumn fire, and looked around him thoughtfully. On the walls hung beautiful pictures, and, shaded by crimson draperies, gleamed marble statues ; and there were flowers in precious vases, and books of many themes, and instruments of music. It was the chamber Alured

had prepared for his bride—the bride whom he should see on the morrow. With a young man's love, he had lavished wealth and care in preparing this home for her who was to be the lady of his paradise, and in making it worthy of Stella. Yet Alured sate silent and down-cast, and it seemed as if he were not the same as he who on the Druids' Mound had sunk overpowered with the rapture of the promise of Stella's love. As he looked around him, he strove to picture Stella dwelling there, and the more he strove the more faint grew the vision of his fancy; the more unreal it seemed that she—that stately being—great and wise above all he had ever dreamed—should come to him and be his wife, and dwell in an earthly home. Nay, as he strove to conjure up the reality of his hopes, it seemed as if a dead cold doubt came over him. “Would it be *well* she should thus come?” Her goodness, her wisdom, her graces, and gentleness, were perfect, and beyond all words of praise; but would not that very beauty make all things beside it seem bare and dull—would not that wisdom and goodness prove too high and majestic and solemn for all Alured's moods of pleasure, ambition, weariness? Alured's soul darkened as he thought. He felt himself, and hated to feel, poor and mean of nature, and that he could not endure the effulgence he had called down into his common earthly life. How should he bear to gaze always on that perfect beauty?—how should he hold always that high converse?—how should he live that noble, holy, devoted life which Stella should not scorn?—how (and as he thought it the shameful flush dyed his temples)—how should he bear to hear the idle wonder or empty jests of his friends at the beauty and the wisdom alike above their standard and their comprehension? Then, again, his mood changed, and his thoughts went back to Stella's gentleness and love, to her face of ineffable loveliness, to the power and truth of all her words; and a gush of his old love came over him, and he cried: “What can there be in earth or hell not worth striving or bearing if only I may call that seraph of heaven my own, and welcome her here—my wife—the angel of my home?” Suddenly Alured grew pale, and paused. “Home!” he murmured. “Will it be home-like with Stella? Can I breathe in the air she breathes; strain my languid thoughts up to her height of genius; gaze on that sun-like beauty and never grow bewildered with its brightness; be great and good as she is high and holy; and love her—love her with that supreme and perfect love she asks?” Alured sate silent. That high-strung life, that passionate emotion to which Stella had awakened him, exhausted him to contemplate as the duty and the sentiment of all his future years. He sank into anxious, miserable thought, and step by step his memory went back over his past youth—over the burning hours he had spent with Stella—over the dreary void of the time ere he beheld her, when he had longed to find such ideal women, and despised all others; and then at last back to the love of his boyhood—

to Angela, whom his wayward fancy had first offered love, and then neglect, and who had died—he knew not how, but knew himself guilty. “Ah, Angela!” he murmured. “Angela—thou hadst not Stella’s unearthly beauty, nor Stella’s eloquent lips, and knowledge of things above a mortal’s ken. But, Angela, would not thy humbler love have been dearer? would not my life have been happier beside thee, than lifted up by Stella into that air, too clear and pure and bright for mortal breath?” Thus Alured pondered doubtfully.

The day appointed came, and at sunrise Alured stood on the Druids’ Mound. Already the wintry frost had come, and the sun rose redly over the woods, and the dead fern under the trees looked like the feathers of slaughtered birds, and the grass upon the mound was drenched with dew and scattered over with decaying leaves. Alured was calm and frigid in the morning light, and almost asked himself whether all he had seen on that mound had not been a vision of the moonshine hours. By-and-by, out of the thicket Stella stepped forth. Alured could not see that divine form, that face of speechless love and gentleness, without feeling his heartstrings stirred with warm emotion. He came forward and clasped her hand, and drew her towards him. Stella yielded to his caress, but looked at him searchingly, and then, as he could almost fancy, brushed a tear away from her eyes.

“Stella, my beloved,” he said. “Dear Stella, I have been labouring to make my home worthy of thee. How soon wilt thou come and dwell there with me for ever?”

“Alured!”

“What is it that disturbs thee, my beloved?” said Alured.

“Alured, how wouldst thou that I should come to thy home? Shall I come as thou hast seen me, with the star on my brow? Shall I come thus to thee, dear Alured, as the bride of thy heart?”

Then Alured grew pale and his voice faltered, and he spoke doubtfully. “As thou wilt so let it be, Stella, my beloved.”

“But will this be as thou wouldst have me, Alured?”

And Alured took courage and looked round. The sun was shining cold and clear; the woods were stripped of their leaves and showed their stems, black and sharp against the sky, and through an opening where the storm had stricken them he could see his own ancestral castle, and the familiar windows of his chamber, glittering in the rising sun. On the one hand was the real, on the other the ideal—the world of every day, and the world of his dreams. Alured thought he might reconcile the two. He answered Stella:

“Dearest and fairest! To me thou art best as I have seen thee first; I love thy soft star. Behold how I kiss the hem of thy radiant robe! But all the men and women of earth are not like me, nor would they understand thy beauty. Since thou wilt have me say all I desire, then, beloved, grant me my prayer. Reserve thy star for

my happy eyes alone, and veil it, or lay it by, if so thou mayest, when others behold thee. Deign to come to me as a human bride, and not as a daughter of higher worlds unknown."

For a moment the white robe closed round Stella like a veil, and Alured deemed he heard one long sobbing sigh. Then she cast back her garment and the waves of her red-gold hair, and smiled and said:

"Be it so, dear Alured. Thy bride shall be as the daughters of earth, and none shalt deem thou hast wedded a being more than mortal."

There was somewhat in the voice of the lady as she spoke these words, which brought a chill to Alured's heart; he knew not why. It seemed as if a treasure, more precious than rubies, had been taken from him. For a moment he hesitated, and something within him prompted him to pray Stella to forget what he had said, and to come to him in all the glory of celestial beauty. But he looked towards his home, and thought of his mother and his friends, and he answered:

"Thanks, dearest Stella; thanks a thousand times. I shall love thee far better since I, and only I, shall know from how great a height thou hast descended to bless me. And now, beloved, bid me wait no more, but tell me when thou wilt be mine own?"

And Stella answered and said:

"Nay, Alured, much more must I learn now of my duties, and of what thou wilt desire of thy future wife, ere I come to thee and take my place at thy side without causing thee any pain. There is much to be changed ere I can become such an one as men may deem thy fitting bride. I may hide this radiant star; but this white glittering robe, wouldst thou have me change it, and restrain these flowing locks, and put from my feet these golden sandals? Shall I change this garment of heaven for the dress thou wilt bring me from the great city?"

"Ay, dear Stella," said Alured; "if so far thou mightest condescend, I would greatly rejoice."

"And my words, Alured? Shall I speak no more of nobler worlds and grander feelings than this world and the feelings wherein thou hast dwelt? Shall I bring wisdom no more from the lips of the mighty dead, and reason no more of Life and Death and Duty and Immortality?"

"To me, to me, dear Stella, thou shalt speak of these things when we are alone: but before the world thou wilt surely learn to speak as others of the things of the hour and of the trifles which interest other women?"

"One word more, Alured! I have loved thee with a high and holy love, and while our two souls may dwell in that great joy, even thy poor world would be as heaven in its gladness. Tell me, Alured, canst thou thus love me always? Wouldst thou that I should love

thee in such wise—even so that life might be all glorious with truth and faith and noble aims and fervent aspirations? Wilt thou live with me on earth as we might live in heaven?"

And Alured looked upon the ground and muttered:

"I will surely love thee always tenderly, Stella; I would have thee love me the same."

"Nay, Alured, I ask not only for tenderness. Tenderness without honour or holy sympathies, or noble thoughts and deeds, is no tenderness for a daughter of that world whence I have come. Toy not with me more. If it might be that I could love thee with a more earthly love and be content with such love from thee, wouldst thou have it so?"

And Alured was ashamed to answer, and his heart smote him with self-contempt; but he bowed his head in token of acquiescence.

When Alured looked up after a moment's pause, he started to find that Stella was no longer beside him. He gazed anxiously around in the cold grey dawn, but saw her not.

"Stella! Stella!" he cried. "Come back, my beloved, come back! I spoke hastily. Never would I have thee change even so much as one hair of thy royal head. Come back, my glory, my queen! Come to my home with the star on thy brow, and thy robe of light around thee! Come to me, light of life!"

Then there came a voice, he knew not whence, but it seemed to be near him, and yet above him in the air.

"Never more, O Alured! never shall I visit thee more. I heard thy sighings and I came to thee, for I loved thee, Alured,—I who was once thy cousin, Angela, who roamed these old woods beside thee in our childhood, who listened to the vows of thy boyish love, and then who passed away from this poor home below to the blessed land on high. Thou didst sigh for thine ideal of beauty and of goodness, and I came to give it to thee—for the Ideal of earth is the Real of heaven, and all the high visions of men of the holy and the beautiful are but the prophecy and the shadow of that which the Blessed are. But, Alured, thine heart failed in thy trial—failed to lift itself up to thine ideal, even when it was given to thy prayers. Thou wouldst not have me as I am; thou wouldst have changed me to the semblance of the very beings thou didst despise. My star of glory, my robe of purity, my words of heaven's wisdom, my very love, so high and holy, thou wouldst have had me change or cast aside. Thou couldst adore thine ideal far away; but, brought near to thee, it only struck fear and awe to thy weak and worldly heart. Fear not, Alured! That ideal shall haunt thee no more. Fear not, thy life shall be too high and noble, thy bride too beautiful and wise. Not I, such as I am, with the form of the immortals: not I, who have breathed the serene air of paradise,

and learned the secrets which are beyond the grave : not I with the glistening white robe around me and the star of light on my brow : not I, nor such as I, shall be thy bride. But thy bride shall be of the clay, and her soul shall be like thine own, full of worldly thoughts and pitiful ambitions, and her love shall be cold and shallow like thine. And day by day, as thy youth fadeth, even so shall fade away every aspiration after the holy and the beautiful which once enchanted thee.

Farewell, Alured ; a last farewell ! Till the heavens be no more, we meet not again."

Then Alured flung himself on the earth and buried his face in the dust. And he arose and went his way and returned to his home. And Alured wept not again for any joy or any grief to the day of his death.

The Magic Mere.

WE rode towards the margin of the mere—
 A lonely curve of emerald. Strangely clear
 Were the still waters, and it seemed to us
 As if a mighty city, luminous
 With marble terraces and porphyry
 Cupolas, lay beneath that watery sky.
 Long was our gaze; and while, 'mid fading light,
 We talked about the visionary sight,
 Quoth Raoul: "When supper's over, a cigar
 Will cheer us both in the old tavern bar,
 And you shall hear the story: Annie Leigh,
 The landlord's niece, can tell it pleasantly."

Massive sirloin, and pasty of the deer,
 Old ale in silver tankards, amber-clear,
 And then the story. Slept mine host in peace,
 While sparkling Annie Leigh, his buxom niece,
 Told the old tale in simple rustic wise,
 With sweet shy lips and brown half-credulous eyes.

I.

Mighty of old was the City; a great king dwelt therein—
 A monarch of wide wild conquest, a monarch of cruel sin.
 Close by the gate of the Palace a magic fountain rose,
 And all who drank its waters forgot for awhile their woes.

II.

But the King said: "Far more precious than rarest draughts of wine
 Is the stream that arises ever from this free fount of mine;
 Yet the country lasses drink it, and churls of common clay.
 Up with a gateway of granite, and drive the mob away!"

III.

So the magical Fountain struggled within its prison of stone
Like the mighty heart of a Poet by scornful men unknown.
In the City the people murmured ever below their breath,
For the frown of the King was a scourge, and the word of the King
was death.

IV.

There came a great betrothal: a Princess was to wed
A Prince of another nation; and lo the old King said:
"Richer is magical water than wine of high account.
Fetch thou a stoup, my daughter, of the lymph of the Magic Fount."

V.

Tripped the beautiful Princess down the stairs of stone,
Bearing a golden pitcher, dreaming and blushing, alone.
Softly she raised the cover: the water arose in its might,
And she fell in its cold embraces upon her bridal night!

VI.

Angrily rose the flood with a mighty murmuring sound:
The King with his guests of honour, the City and people, were drowned;
And the Magic Mere abideth until the Judgment Day,
Unless some knightly diver shall bring the pitcher away.

She ceased. We pondered. Raoul said to me:
"Is it the knowledge which makes nations free
Kings strive to hide—till its swift outburst brings
Destruction both on nations and on kings?"
I really can't remember what I said.
We thanked blithe Annie, and went off to bed;
And all night long, through water strangely clear,
I dived for the pitcher in the Magic Mere.

MORTIMER COLLINS.

The Chateau de Beaucour.

A GHOST STORY.

THE following incident, not long ago, made some noise in a northern department of France.

The shadows of night had long crept over the earth, when a large party of servants were gathered round a blazing fire, one Christmas Eve, in the year 185—. The fire roared and crackled, and the blaze flew up the chimney of the great wide hearth. The servants insensibly drew their chairs nearer to the friendly heat, as if to make sure that it was real and substantial; that they should not awake the next moment to find themselves in the open air, freezing and gradually whitening with the huge snow-flakes. The beautiful white snow had been falling the whole day, and now lay thick upon the ground. But although it looked beautiful, it was, at best, cold and uninviting. The friendly fireside appeared to greet all who approached it with a double welcome.

The Château de Beaucour was the property of the Comte Adrien de Beaucour—a family as ancient as it was renowned; numbers of whose ancestors had perished—some on the battle-field, covered in glory; some for their attachment and fidelity to an unhappy monarch; some for their open enmity to a reigning usurper. But the world agreed that never had a Beaucour perished ignominiously. The breath of infamy had never sullied that fair escutcheon. The château was situated on the borders of an immense forest, so thickly studded with trees that no one had ever penetrated to the centre of the interior. It was said a man had once been found bold enough to wager that he would carve his initials upon the centre tree, and return with a branch. But he had never returned; never again been heard of or seen. Only, a week after his disappearance, it was said that a mysterious-looking being, almost as slim as a lamp-post, and dressed in a black, tight-fitting suit, had appeared at the château, thrust a paper into the hand of the reigning housekeeper, and as mysteriously departed. When the paper came to be opened, it contained these words: “He who would penetrate into the mysteries of the enchanted forest, must first obtain permission of its king, or seek the philosopher’s stone.” Evidently, then, the forest was enchanted, and Jean Poussin had suffered for his temerity. Monsieur le Curé had made a grave discourse upon the sin of curiosity, from the pulpit; and the matter had been more than a nine days’

marvel. All this was only tradition ; but it had had its effect, and was universally believed. Never since that day had man, woman, or child been found bold enough to hazard a second venture.

We have recorded this past tradition simply to show that the people of Beaucour, especially those of the lower order, were inclined to be superstitious ; to believe in the supernatural, and in unearthly visitations. Let us hasten forward.

At the period of our story the family were away from the château. They had gone for a time to seek the distractions and gaieties of Paris, hoping thereby to drown a great grief which had fallen upon them. But lately they had lost their second son. They had now but one child left to hand down their name to posterity. He who was gone had been a wild, excitable young fellow of five-and-twenty ; continually in mischief and embarrassment ; never out of debt. Yet he had been much loved, for he had possessed the kindest heart in the world. It was believed that had he lived he would have proved himself made of sterling material. All that was now past for ever. Lucien de Beaucour had taken a fever at the château ; which, with the help of the infatuated French doctors, had, at the end of a week, terminated his young life. The eldest son, Montador de Beaucour, was away in the Holy Land, upon a six months' tour. Monsieur and Madame de Beaucour, unable to bear the sad quiet of the château, where every object reminded them of their lost son, went to Paris ; hoping, by change of scene, to assuage the poignancy of their sorrow. The servants, twelve in number, were left in possession of the château, under the absolute control of Mademoiselle Fifine, the housekeeper.

For the past two nights the existence of some mysterious presence had been rumoured amongst the servants of the château. Strange sounds had been heard ; curious things seen ; banging of doors ; extinguishing of lights ; some said even groans had been distinctly uttered from a particular passage communicating with the rooms occupied by Monsieur Lucien during his lifetime. The first night the sounds were held to be mere fancy ; but when they continued on the second night, the servants began to whisper amongst themselves that the ghost of their dead-and-gone young master haunted the dwelling-house.

"And well it may," cried Rosalie, a red-faced, good-natured girl, with a fearless tongue. "Well it may ! Such a life as Monsieur Lucien led must require many masses to get his soul out of purgatory. And look at that fat old Père Félix—he's not likely to offer up more masses than he can help ! not he ! he's too fond of his stomach, and that makes him lazy."

"Rosalie !" cried Mademoiselle Fifine, who happened to enter the great kitchen at that moment, with her voice of authority, and her severe face of five-and-thirty years. "Rosalie ! I am ashamed

of you, you wicked, blasphemous woman. Take care that *you* get out of purgatory when once you are in. I shall make it my business to acquaint Monsieur le Curé with the awful words of impiety I have just heard you utter. You may prepare yourself for a strong penance."

"Eh bien!" retorted Rosalie. Had she known of mademoiselle's close vicinity, she would not have spoken quite so freely; as the mischief was done, there was nothing left but to put a bold face upon it. "Eh bien, mademoiselle!" she reiterated; "the château is haunted by Monsieur Lucien's ghost; and the Père Félix is a lazy gourmand. Why! I know for a fact that he eats poultry every day of his life—Fridays included—besides many other nice dishes which his cook is wearing out her life to invent. And I do say, that so long as he has the offering up of the masses, Monsieur Lucien will not rest in peace. Mark my words. Only last night I left my candle for a moment in the west corridor, and when I returned the place was in darkness."

"Perhaps it was the wind, Rosalie," suggested Babette, a young girl whose pale face and chattering teeth betrayed the effect of the conversation upon her.

"Wind!" retorted Rosalie, indignantly. "As much as I am the wind. I distinctly heard a groan. When I looked towards the end of the corridor, I caught something fluttering and rustling, for all the world like the pale garments of the dead. It appeared to be approaching me, but I did not wait for that: I took to my heels, and left my candle in the passage."

"You are a miserable imbecile," pronounced Mademoiselle Fifine, seating herself near the group, for a moment's repose. "You will have to perform some pilgrimage for this sin. Do you for an instant suppose that Monsieur le Comte will not have masses offered up in Paris? The night before he left, 'Mademoiselle Fifine,' said he, 'I intend to have masses offered up in La Madeleine every day for a month, for the repose of the soul of our dear son. I have passed my word to Madame la Comtesse that this shall be done. And I never go from my word,' he added, with that dignity of tone and look which you all know is peculiar to him. Ah, ciel!" continued Mademoiselle Fifine, "why has so great a trial befallen this family? Monsieur Lucien was so kind, so good. A little wild, perhaps, but that was his young blood. After all, give me a young man like Monsieur Lucien, rather than one who sits and mopes in the chimney corner, poring over books until his cheeks are pale and his back is bent."

Scarcely had Mademoiselle Fifine ended her sentence, when a distant door was heard to bang loudly; and a sound, as if some heavy weight had fallen down overhead, startled them out of their seats. Even Mademoiselle Fifine turned pale, and drew nearer the fire.

"What can it be?" she asked, as soon as she could sufficiently control her voice.

"Bah!" returned Rosalie. "Why the ghost, of course. That's just the kind of noise they make. Perhaps you'll believe *now* the château's haunted."

The whole party crossed themselves, not excepting impious Rosalie. To tell the truth; all the sharpness and hardness lay in her tongue; her heart was right enough; and that Mademoiselle Fifine knew.

"How are we all to go to bed?" continued Rosalie. "We shall have to sit up here until to-morrow morning. Jean, you had better go out at once, and bring in a stock of wood and coal."

Jean was one of the under-gardeners, a lad of nineteen or twenty, who slept in the house because Monsieur le Comte had brought him up from a child, and took great interest in his welfare.

"Very well," answered Jean, rising, but visibly frightened. "Will you not accompany me, Rosalie?"

"Accompany you!" retorted Rosalie. "What for?"

"Oh, nothing. Only it is rather dark. And—suppose—I should meet the ghost?"

"Meet the ghost! Then give it my compliments. What, Jean! are you frightened? A man in terror! Quelle honte! How can the ghost be in the courtyard, when ye have just heard it upstairs?"

Jean went off, and returned in an incredibly short space of time, staggering beneath the weight of his heavy burden. He threw it into a corner, and fell into a seat.

"Well," cried Rosalie, "what have you seen?"

He seemed incapable of answering. His mouth opened, yet no sound came forth. Mademoiselle Fifine saw his condition, and had pity upon him.

"Bring him a petit-verre," she said. "Don't you perceive that he has seen something which has run away with his wits and his courage?"

Under the influence of the cognac Jean recovered speech.

"I was returning with my load of wood and coals," he explained, "when I caught sight of a light in one of the upper windows. What can that be? I wondered; for I knew I had left you all safe in the kitchen. Almost at the same moment a tall, white figure came to the window——"

"Look to Babette," interrupted Mademoiselle Fifine, in a hollow tone. "She is fainting. Go on with your story, Jean."

"A tall, white figure approached the window," repeated Jean. "It was taller than anything I ever saw in life. Its arms were stretched out to me, and appeared so long that I thought it would surely clutch hold of me, and spirit me away in spite of my heavy load. I hastened my steps, and must have fallen had there been many more to take."

Mademoiselle Fifine reflected a moment. Things were certainly coming to a disagreeable pass. If not put a stop to, she could not tell what might be the consequences. Her superior understanding would not allow her to confess that the château was haunted. Yet she could not say that she was comfortable. And she felt a most wholesome dread of visiting the haunted corridor alone.

"The house cannot be haunted," she said at length. "There are no such things as ghosts. I have heard Monsieur le Curé say so times out of number."

"No such things as ghosts!" they all cried in a breath. Each one of them had a separate story, to prove that there were such things as ghosts; that ghosts had been seen in the village of Beaucour.

"As for Monsieur le Curé," replied Rosalie, disdainfully; "he may say that there are no ghosts, but he doesn't believe it. I remember, once, a house in the village was reported to be haunted. He was sent for. Do you think he would come? *Pas si bête*. He sent word that he was bad with the migraine. His migraine must have soon passed off. In about an hour he sat down to a beautiful little supper. Hot partridge and bread sauce, washed down with one of those good bottles of chablis, of which his cellar is full. That I know for a fact, Mamzelle Fifine, for his housekeeper herself told me—she who died two years ago, of a surfeit of cucumber and cream tart."

"I remember that ghost story quite well," exclaimed Louis Van Damme, the head gardener, a man of Dutch extraction. "Remember it as if it were but yesterday. It occurred to poor Madame Genlis. She fancied she had seen her daughter enter the room, and approach her. Her daughter was fifty leagues away from home. But nothing could persuade Madame that it was a delusion. She was convinced that it was her daughter, and that something would happen. Sure enough, in three days there came a letter to say that Mademoiselle Genlis had died. Died the very day and the very hour in which she had appeared to her mother. I for one do not go so far as to say there are no such things as ghosts."

"There are! there are!" moaned Babette, who had recovered her consciousness, though not her courage. "I was once crossing the churchyard late at night, when a tall spectre, dressed in grave-clothes, rose up suddenly from behind one of the tombs. It made a spring at me, and I fell senseless to the ground."

"Ah, but," interrupted the head gardener, "that was proved to be no ghost at all. Nothing more than a man who had dressed himself up to frighten people."

"I cannot say whether it was a man or not," replied Babette: "I know it was a ghost. No man would so have had the power to frighten me. No man could have been so tall. When I recovered my senses

the ghost was gone. I rushed home as quickly as I was able, but nothing followed me. From that day I have had an awful terror of ghosts. Oh, Mademoiselle Fifine!" continued the girl, with a fearful shudder, "if the house be really haunted, I must leave it. It would kill me to remain here."

Even as she spoke, the banging of a second door overhead, and another fall, echoed through the house. At the same time, a species of unearthly shriek became audible. The terrified group clung to each other, feeling as if their last hour had come.

"This is awful!" cried Mademoiselle Fifine, a cold perspiration breaking over her face in spite of herself. "C'est affreux! If this goes on you will all become patients for Charenton. I cannot allow it to continue. How foolish you all are. Louis! instead of setting them an example of bravery, you show yourself the greatest coward. What! do you leave it to me, a woman, to sustain your courage? For shame! This shall end. We will, together, make a tour of inspection upstairs. I will prove to you that what we have to-night heard, is but the effect of the wind. You, Louis, shall head the procession, bearing aloft a torch. Come, mes enfants. Banish your fears. Pluck up courage. Make the sign of the cross, and you will then be able to face the very diable himself. Light the torch, Louis Van Damme."

Most reluctantly Louis rose to obey. He dared not show his cowardice, for the whole set of women would have laughed him to scorn when the present danger was past and gone. He could do nothing but obey, but he did it as slowly as possible. I blush to record it, but his hand shook visibly as he kindled the torch. That done, he turned round and asked which way they were to go.

"Which way!" returned Mademoiselle Fifine; "upstairs, of course. Through all the rooms; along the west-corridor; into the very chamber occupied by Monsieur Lucien. Those who do not follow me I shall never think well of again. Not that way, Louis," she cried, as the man was going off in the direction of the back-stairs; "not that way. Up the grand staircase, and so on through the best rooms. Courage, and your right foot foremost. Don't drop the torch, let what may happen."

Mademoiselle Fifine talked loud and fast, to drown, if truth must be told, the beating of her heart. She would not confess, even to herself, that she was afraid. But she was so, nevertheless. She was the head of them, and compelled to exhibit courage; but had Monsieur le Comte been at home to take command of the expedition, nothing would have induced her to have made one of them. So much greater credit due to her, that she so nobly performed her duty. But it was to be hoped that their courage would not have to stand the test of an unearthly visitor.

They ascended the grand staircase, clinging to each other. Louis just a foot in advance, bore aloft the torch, which threw a strong light upon surrounding objects. They passed from the corridor into the large yellow drawing-room. Everything was covered up; looked sombre and dingy enough, but yet quiet and undisturbed. No ghost visible here.

"You see," cried Mademoiselle Fifine, turning round in triumph upon her audience, "I told you how it would be. Ghosts, indeed! Bah! Depend upon it you may all sleep securely in your beds to-night. Proceed, Louis Van Damme."

Each room was visited in turn, and all with the same success. Everything was found in place; there was nothing to betray that either ghost or man had paid them an unbidden visit."

They had now reached the west corridor, the scene particularly supposed to be haunted. Louis hesitated a moment before opening the door and crossing the threshold, as if hoping that their previous inspection would be pronounced sufficient. But success had imparted real courage to Mademoiselle Fifine; she did not feel inclined to go back.

"Come, Louis," she cried, "throw wide the door, and let us go in. If you halt here, your courage, instead of increasing, will ebb away. Hold the light steadily, and make good use of your eyes."

The door was opened, and they passed through. But no sooner had they entered the passage, than a peculiar smell caused them to halt in their march.

"What can it be?" wondered Mademoiselle Fifine, sniffing timidly.

"Sulphur," replied Rosalie. And they all agreed with her.

"What could bring sulphur here, I should like to know?" returned Mademoiselle Fifine, pretending to doubt the fact. "Louis, I hope you have carried the torch safely."

"Safe enough, mademoiselle," replied Louis, his face the picture of terror. "But if this goes on, I don't answer for what I may do. Hark! what was that?"

A hollow groan was distinctly heard by each one of them, issuing from the further end of the passage. At the same time it was accompanied by a peculiar sound, as if some unhappy being was dragging itself about in chains. Undisguised terror took possession of the whole party. They implored Mademoiselle Fifine to return to the kitchen without further search.

"Were I to do so," replied Mademoiselle Fifine, whose face was deadly pale, "you would none of you go to bed to-night. To-morrow we should laugh at our silly fears. People would cast ridicule upon me, when the story became known. No, we must complete our task. I am certain we shall find nothing. When we return to the kitchen, I will dose you all round with brandy and water, as a reward for your bravery. En avant, Louis. Steady with the torch."

Scarcely had they set off again, when another groan, louder than the last, arrested their steps. At the same moment a door slowly opened, and a tall figure, dressed in white from head to foot, became visible, surrounded by a pale, sickly light. As it shook its outstretched arms, they heard chains distinctly clank. For an instant it appeared to waver; then commenced slowly gliding towards them.

A shriek, such as had never been heard within those walls, rose up and rent the air. It was a shriek that might have reached the village, had the wind not been in the contrary direction. Without waiting to see what the ghost would do, the terrified group rushed back; down the staircase, *pêle môle*, helter skelter: Louis first, Mademoiselle Fifine last. They never stopped until safe by the kitchen fire; where poor Babette relapsed into a state of unconsciousness.

It was well that Babette required some care; it took them out of their terror for the moment. But as soon as she showed signs of returning consciousness, fear came back to them with increased force.

"Perhaps, Mademoiselle Fifine, you will still say there are no such things as ghosts," cried Rosalie, triumphantly.

"I know not what to think," replied Mademoiselle Fifine, who was now in almost as much terror as the rest. "We certainly have seen something very strange."

"Ugh!" shuddered Jean. "Did you see its arms, *mamzelle*? And did you not hear the jingling of its chains?"

"Do ghosts have chains?" asked Marie, the head chambermaid.

"Not unless they have escaped from purgatory," replied Louis. "If it has come straight from thence, would it not account for the strong smell of sulphur?"

"Ah!" cried Rosalie. "I had forgotten the smell. It is but another proof that it is a supernatural visitor."

"What else could it be?" demanded Louis.

"An escaped maniac," suggested Mademoiselle Fifine.

"The saints forbid!" returned Rosalie. "We might all be murdered before morning. I would rather it were a ghost. Hark at it, now!"

A strange noise was certainly going on overhead. The ghost seemed restless. They thought they heard it descending the stairs.

"It is coming here!" cried Louis; while Rosalie darted forward and locked the various doors.

"As if keys could keep out a ghost," said Mademoiselle Fifine. "Louis, I tell you what it is. You must go at once to Monsieur le Curé, with my compliments, and ask him to return with you. Tell him what we have seen; beg of him to bring some charm. But his presence alone may prove sufficient."

"Pardon, *mademoiselle*," returned Louis, in a very decided tone. "In the daytime I will obey you, and even walk a dozen miles if you

command me. But here I am safe, and here I intend to remain until daylight. To-morrow Monsieur le Curé may come if he likes; I should suggest his staying all night."

"And so should I," echoed Rosalie. "It will make him rather more anxious to offer up masses. It will put a little spirit into him; perhaps spoil his appetite for a week. That would be a charity — his poor cook would have a rest for once in her life. As to going out, Mademoiselle Fifine, the weather alone is enough to keep a bear in his den."

"But we cannot stay here all night," objected Mademoiselle Fifine. "Will you go to bed?"

They turned pale at the thought, and drew their chairs an inch nearer one another. It was very clear that they meant to remain where they were.

"No, mademoiselle," replied Rosalie, decisively. "You may go to bed if you like; but we shall not budge an inch until nine o'clock to-morrow morning."

The night wore on. Hour after hour passed by. The assembled party at the château grew pale and sleepy with watching. Even a night of terror could not chase away a few yawns, as the grey mists of morning stole over the earth. Dawn, at this time of the year, is of short duration; no sooner seemed night to be passing away than day had fully broken.

Rosalie started up after a weary silence; gave her arms a rigorous stretch, pinched Louis, who woke up with a start, and prepared to make some strong coffee.

"It will awaken them," she said, nodding at Mademoiselle Fifine, who did not appear to require the stimulant. "It will awaken them, and warm us, mademoiselle. I never saw such a set of sleepy heads in my life. The ghost might have run away with them six times over. Look at Babette."

Babette was, indeed, a miserable object of contemplation. She had not closed her eyes the whole night, but had sat there shaking like one with the ague. Once or twice Rosalie had spoken to her, but the words drew from her nothing but a moan. Her face now looked the colour of chalk, and her eyes were straining into vacancy.

"Can her mind have become affected through fright?" asked Mademoiselle Fifine.

"It looks like it," replied Rosalie, offering the poor girl a cup of strong black coffee.

Babette took the cup, and drank the contents mechanically. No sooner had she done so than she became violently sick, and then burst into a flood of tears.

"That will save her," cried Rosalie. And she proceeded to hand round the coffee.

"It will give you all courage," she said; "you want it badly enough. The snow has ceased to fall—the sun shines; better than all, the ghost has been silent for hours."

"Ah! the ghost!" cried Louis. "I would not pass such another night to obtain the finest show of peaches in the country. What is to be done, mademoiselle?"

"You must go at once for the Père Félix," replied Mademoiselle Fifine. "You ought to have done so in the night, Louis. We might have been saved this weary vigil. What a pity you did not think of the strong coffee, Rosalie. It might have given Louis a little artificial courage."

"Think of the night, mademoiselle. The snow was blinding."

"True. But that excuse no longer exists. Therefore, Louis, start off at once. Keep a quiet tongue in your head on the road. My dutiful compliments to Monsieur le Curé, and I beg the favour of his immediate attendance."

Louis set out. It would take him twenty minutes to reach the village church of Beaucour. The house of the curé adjoined it.

He was fortunate enough to find the curé at home. The worthy man, who had been so much aspersed by Rosalie, listened to Louis' message, and promised he would come to the château. But he could not possibly wait upon Mademoiselle Fifine before one o'clock. It was Christmas Day; he had much to attend to both in and out of the church.

Louis started on his way home, sorry not to bear with him the protection of the priest's company. As he went along, ghost stories of a bygone day rose up, unbidden, in his memory. Stories of murders; of people who had been spirited away; of others who had been frightened to death by unearthly apparitions. By the time he reached the château he had worked himself into a pitch of terror scarcely inferior to that experienced in the night.

"Well," cried Rosalie, as soon as she saw him appear alone, not giving Mademoiselle Fifine time to speak. "Well! Where's Father Félix?"

"Can't come," replied Louis, unable to say more at the moment.

"I knew it! Catch the Père Félix putting his head within a hundred yards of a haunted house. I know him better than that. What was his excuse, Louis? a bad foot, or the stomach-ache?"

"Neither," replied Louis, laughing at Rosalie's haste.

"Had a tooth out, perhaps," suggested Rosalie.

"The Père Félix is quite well," replied Louis. He had now recovered himself, and turned to Mademoiselle Fifine. "He sends his compliments to you, mademoiselle, and is sorry he cannot wait upon you before one o'clock. It is Christmas Day, you know. He has much work on hand."

"Extra directions to his cook," explained the incorrigible Rosalie, *sotto voce*. But she said no more. She was harder upon the worthy priest than he merited. That he loved a good dinner was certain; but he did not give himself up to the pleasures of the table. On the contrary, though somewhat lazy in the matter of offering up masses, he did much good in the village; was liked and respected.

As the turret-clock of the château struck one, his portly figure might have been seen advancing up the avenue. Mademoiselle Fifine rose to meet him. Her notions of the respect due to the church and its representatives were very great. And Mademoiselle Fifine was right. By respecting others we respect ourselves; and then, as a matter of course, the respect of the world must flow in upon us.

As soon as the curé caught sight of Mademoiselle Fifine, he took off his hat, and advanced bareheaded, even in the cold air, in obedience to the French laws of politeness.

"Bonjour, Mademoiselle Fifine," he exclaimed. "I am truly sorry that I was unable to obey your summons this morning. But now let me hear from your own lips an account of this wonderful story."

Mademoiselle Fifine drew him into the kitchen. Both men and women made him a deep reverence as he pronounced a short benediction upon them. Rosalie, who possessed one of the most dauntless spirits in the world, hoped his health was good.

Before them all, Mademoiselle Fifine related the circumstances of the past night, exactly as they had occurred. She dwelt particularly upon the strong smell of sulphur in the west corridor. When she came to the apparition her voice once more trembled, and her cheeks blanched.

"And what did you do when the ghost appeared?" asked the curé.

"We fled." Mademoiselle Fifine felt to the full the humility of the answer.

"I should not have done that," corrected the curé. "I should have spoken to it."

"A pity you were not there, mon père," put in Rosalie, with a derisive sniff.

"It is, my child," replied the curé, failing to detect the sarcasm. "I might have saved you a night of agony. I should assuredly have made some sort of discovery; what, I cannot tell. Some underhand work is going on here. If we do not now discover the mystery, I propose to pass to-night in company with you all. But it must be kept secret. Should the ghost know of my purpose, I suspect my object would be defeated."

"But, mon père," interrupted Mademoiselle Fifine, "how do you propose to endeavour to fathom this mystery?"

"By making a tour of inspection, my child, as you did last night. And by not flying away should the ghost appear."

"I never heard of ghosts appearing in daylight, Monsieur le Curé," objected Rosalie.

"They sometimes leave their traces behind them," was the significant reply. "If we discover neither ghost nor traces, we must be content to abide the issue of another night. In that case I would recommend you to get in a good supply of coals and wood. Now let us go up-stairs. My children," he continued, looking round, "I hope where I go you will not fear to follow."

Had it been night, it is impossible to say how far successful the appeal might have been. Daylight gave his hearers courage, and they prepared to obey.

They ascended the stairs just as they had done the previous night, and went through the very same rooms. Everything was as it had then been. Not the slightest trace of a visitor; not a footmark to be seen on the brightly-polished floors. The west corridor was reached, and the curé boldly entered. Yes. The smell of sulphur was still there. Stale, and somewhat faint, it is true; but it was there; proof of what had been; of what, perhaps, still was. They looked to the further end of the passage, expecting the door to open. But all was still and silent, "The ghost is sleeping," cried the curé, irreverently. "Perhaps we shall make an easy capture of him."

Mademoiselle Fifine would have rebuked any one else; the curé was, of course, a privileged being. He made straight for the door at which the ghost had appeared. It was the room Monsieur Lucien had occupied during his lifetime. Everything was quiet and still. The room, certainly, was in slight disorder, as though it had been in some way tenanted; but the fearful visitor had disappeared. The cupboards were searched; the curé went so far as to peer under the bed; the solution to the mystery appeared as far off as ever.

"Are you all quite certain that you saw this ghost?" he enquired.

There was no doubt about it.

"Then we must continue our search. What other rooms have you?"

"Several," replied Mademoiselle Fifine. "The next room to this is the plate-room."

"The plate-room!" echoed the curé, catching at the word. "Let us go there next."

"But no one could enter the plate-room, mon père," objected Mademoiselle Fifine. "I carry the key in my pocket. It never leaves my possession."

"I have heard that bolts and bars are no impediment to a ghost," replied the curé. "Have the goodness to open the door."

The key was brought up from the depths of Mademoiselle Fifine's ponderous pocket, and fitted into the lock. But it would not yield.

"How's this?" cried Mademoiselle Fifine, a terror worse than any

preceding taking possession of her. "I cannot get the door open. I have never yet known this to happen."

"Ah! ah!" cried the curé. "I smell a rat."

"Louis," said Mademoiselle Fifine, "come forward and try your strength. My hands are powerless. My limbs feel as if they were giving way. We are on the brink of some fearful discovery."

After considerable difficulty the door was opened. The curé entered first. Everything seemed in good order.

"What may that be?" asked the curé, pointing to a large grey chest at the further end of the room.

"That is one of the plate-chests," explained Mademoiselle Fifine. "It is quite full of beautiful silver. The key is in my pocket," she added, commencing another diving expedition into that huge receptacle.

"Save yourself the trouble, my child," returned the curé. "The chest is open, and empty. Behold the mystery."

But they could not fathom it. Their brains were too much paralyzed by terror to take in aught beyond the bare fact.

"I do not understand," said Mademoiselle Fifine, feeling as if the floor were giving way. "What can a ghost want with tea-pots and coffee-pots, with spoons and forks? What fearful mystery have we here?"

"Your ghost turns out to be a robber, my child. What you took to be an apparition was simply a man dressed up in a sheet. Had you only persevered, you would have exposed him, or prevented this disaster. Whilst you were shaking in your shoes below, he was quietly filling his bags with the silver, secure from interruption. But he could not have carried off all that plate alone. He must have had help, and more than one accomplice. So much the better. They will be more easily tracked. 'Tis strange! This appears to be the work of one well acquainted with the position of the house and its various rooms."

Mademoiselle Fifine had sunk down upon a chair, far too overcome even to give way to tears.

"What will become of me?" she moaned. "This room has always been under my charge. The keys have never left my possession. Yet the room is broken into and robbed. I shall be accused of I know not what. I shall have to go to prison, and perhaps terminate my wretched existence upon the scaffold."

"Calm yourself, my child," said the curé. "I will answer for it that no blame shall attach to you. Monsieur le Comte is as satisfied of your probity as of his own. It is evident that you know nothing of this affair. It is the work of some wicked men, who themselves deserve to suffer upon the scaffold. In the first place for robbing your worthy and renowned master; and secondly for terrifying you in this infamous manner. It is a matter which I look upon as worse than

the robbery itself; for it has many and many a time deprived people of reason and life."

They did not say then, how nearly it had done the one or the other for Babette. She, poor girl, was unconscious of it; none knew it but Mademoiselle Fifine and Rosalie; and they thought it best for the girl's sake to keep the knowledge to themselves.

"Have you more plate in the room?" asked the curé.

"Yes," answered Mademoiselle Fifine. She pointed to a cupboard and again dived into her pocket.

"This is also open," said the curé, throwing wide the doors. "But it appears not to have been disturbed."

"It has," returned Mademoiselle Fifine. "I miss a pair of candlesticks; nothing more."

"Ah! no doubt they intend to continue their work to-night," observed the priest. "We may, after all, entrap the ghost."

"And recover the silver!" cried Mademoiselle Fifine, going off in a dead swoon from the revulsion of feeling.

"Possibly," answered the curé. "And now, my children," he continued, as soon as Mademoiselle Fifine was herself again, "you must attend to me, and for once, obey me to the letter. Not one of you must this day leave the château, no matter what the pretence or necessity. Mademoiselle Fifine, I give you strict charge over them. Do not lose sight of them for an instant. If any one of you attempts to quit the house this day, even for one half hour, I shall consider him or her an accomplice in the crime. And they shall be dealt with accordingly. I myself will arrive to-night about eight o'clock, and bring with me one or two men well armed. I think we shall then be a sufficient number to master a ghost; or even more, should we find them multiplied."

Father Félix then took his departure, having accepted, at the hands of Mademoiselle Fifine, a glass of *curaçoa* to keep out the cold.

The day passed slowly away to the impatient inmates of the Chateau de Beaucour. Louis Van Damme, who was a coward only in matters relating to the supernatural, longed to "have it out" with the pretended ghost, for the ridiculous object it had made him in the eyes of Mademoiselle Fifine and his fellow-servants. Rosalie, too, whose habitual daring had given way under the force of example, felt that she should be relieved could she but clutch hold of the ghost's hair and carry away a handful in triumph. Mademoiselle Fifine was in an agony for two reasons: in case the ghost should not appear again; and lest, though he should appear, the silver should not be recovered. Who could tell? It might be melted; or it might be buried; and the ghost might turn out an obstinate ruffian, and sternly refuse to give up the secret of its hiding-place.

Yet time, who never stands still; whether to the weary sufferer

upon a bed of pain, or to the lover hastening to meet the object of his affections; spread forth his wings, and ushered in the night to the longing inmates of the chateau. Eight o'clock struck. Soon after, the curé made his appearance, attended by two stalwart men, armed to the teeth. The night was very dark; he felt certain their entrance had not been perceived. They seated themselves with the rest of the group, and the conversation was carried on in an undertone. Even in the French villages, the servants living in high families are more intelligent, more sprightly and sensible in conversation, than are our own people of the same class in England. The curé, who happened to be a man of education and travel, related many anecdotes and stories of his past life. Thus the time passed away with amazing swiftness.

At the unexpected sound of midnight, a sudden silence fell upon the whole group. They listened. Upon the last stroke of the hour a door banged, and a heavy weight was heard to fall overhead.

"Just as it happened last night," whispered Mademoiselle Fifine, to the curé. "They are at it again."

"Then now is our time," replied Father Félix. "I hope we are well armed. Have you the cords?"

The procession started off once more, this time direct for the west corridor. They moved quietly along; yet sufficient noise was made to give warning of their approach. As on the previous night, they were met by a strong smell of sulphur when the door was opened. As they entered the passage, the door of Monsieur Lucien's room flew back and the ghost appeared. But his visitors had evidently arrived before the expected time; for in his hurry the white sheet had been imperfectly put on, and fell off. He backed into the room, and the whole party rushed in upon him. They discovered two men instead of one. To their astonishment, they recognised in the ghost a late servant of the household, whom the comte had dismissed for a slight act of dishonesty. Determined to have his revenge, and at the same time hoping to become enriched, he had linked himself to a notorious thief; had plotted, and almost effectually carried out his wicked purpose. The curé called upon them to surrender themselves. After a short struggle they were secured; firmly bound with cords, and placed in a strong room. The next morning they were carried off to the nearest prison, to await their trial.

Little more remains to be told. The plate was recovered, to Mademoiselle Fifine's great joy. More than ever, she now declared her disbelief in ghosts. Rosalie compromised the matter in her own mind. If this turned out to be no ghost, it was no reason why other ghosts should all have the same ending. For her part she was persuaded there was more in it than appeared on the surface. The men might prove to be ghosts after all. When the day of trial arrived, their cells

would very likely be found empty. One effect, however, it had upon her: she never again spoke evil of Father Félix or his courage. Whatever she might think she kept it to herself. As she was one who always declared her thoughts freely, it is more than probable that her mind had undergone a complete change upon the subject.

The prisoners were brought up to trial at the following assizes. He who had personated the ghost was proved to be the leader of the plot, and was sentenced to twenty years' hard labour. His comrade, in virtue of being only aider and abettor, was considered entitled to the plea of "extenuating circumstances," and was sentenced to fifteen years. Not many days later, they might have been seen, in their convicts' dress, their hair closely cut, starting on their long journey to the galères at Toulon.

C. W. W.

The Legend of the Mysterious Piper.

IN TWO PARTS.

PART I.

'Twas in the harvest time, it matters not how many years ago. The sun was shining, the men and women reaping, the gleaners gleaning, when Madge Kirk, a tall, strapping lassie, suddenly dropt her reaping-hook, fell back on the stubble, and screamed aloud :

"The deil ! the deil !" she cried.

In a moment she was surrounded by her companions, in answer to whose questions she could not articulate a word. All she could do was to scream, kick, and point at a piled sheaf which stood at a distance of a few yards ; but the cause of her alarm at once became apparent. Protruding from the centre of the sheaf, and glaring vacantly at the crowd, was a great human head, profusely ornamented with tangled red locks and the most luxuriant of red whiskers.

"The deil ! the deil !" cried the reapers, catching Madge's alarm, and taking to their heels in a body. One or two men, however, either because their legs failed them, or because they were naturally more courageous, stood stock-still, staring open-mouthed at the apparition, whose face evinced as much consternation as their own, and who, after wildly gasping for breath, at length found voice.

"Tinna be fear't, goot folk, tinna be fear't ! she's no' the teil, but a poor piper !"

With these words the great head protruded itself more and more, till first a pair of arms, then a stunted body, then a pair of tattered kilts, and, lastly, two bare and hairy legs dragged themselves out of the wheat-sheaf. This strange figure, after suddenly presenting itself, cast one wild glance at the astonished villagers, and then, with a wild howl, ran swiftly towards the outskirts of the harvest-field. Recovering their fear in a moment, the men gave pursuit, and were speedily joined by the reapers, men and women, who had hastened out of the stranger's reach, but who had by this time gathered courage. The piper, as he had called himself, led the way, leaping and running like a wild deer ; the crowd followed, shouting and stumbling. At last, close to the field-gate, the piper stopped, breathing hard, and was immediately surrounded by his pursuers, who had now a better opportunity than before of examining his personal appearance.

A piper whom melancholy had marked for her own ; a piper, melan-

choly of face, melancholy of mien, melancholy from his horrent hair down to his thick, lugubriously-twisted legs; a piper below the middle height, but with shoulders broad as a giant's, sloping down to the narrow hips of a strongly-built and agile man; a piper pale of face, with small lack-lustre eyes and a huge twisted knob of a nose, that glowed like a red-hot cinder, and whose hair and beard were one tangled mass of red, mingling with the hue of his nose and giving a weirdness to his melancholy.

His dress consisted only of jacket, waistcoat, and kilt of antique tartan—all these articles of raiment being dirty and tattered and torn. It was noticeable that he wore neither shoes nor stockings, and that, although a piper, he carried no pipes.

As this weird being stood panting and puffing amid the villagers, those nearest to him felt that his breath resembled burning flame, and as he panted and glared, and glared and panted, his hair surrounded him like a fiery halo. He panted and stared confusedly, while the reapers questioned him in eager wonder. Who was he? Where had he come from? What did they call him? What had he been doing in the harvest-field? Was he a mortal or a spirit? He answered by rolling his eyes wildly, pointing downwards towards the earth. Horrible! He clearly meant to intimate that he had come from underground, and, from his fiery face and hot breath, it was not difficult to guess the precise locality. Perhaps he was a deil after all! Frightful thought! The rustics drew back shuddering, but as they did so, the piper, with a piteous look, opened his great mouth, pointed down his throat with his forefinger, and imitated the act of drinking. Men and women looked questioningly, with dubious headshakings, at each other; it was clear that the poor creature was craving for something to quench his thirst, which was not at all surprising, seeing the probability that he had come from so very warm a place. Without a moment's hesitation, Jock Sanderson, a wild, whiskey-loving blade, stepped forward and proffered a stone-bottle, which was eagerly seized. But what was Jock's surprise at what followed? After raising the bottle to his lips and tasting the contents, the piper, with a hideous grimace, dashed the bottle to the ground, gave an unearthly cry, and again ran off at full speed, pursued by the amazed reapers.

"Daft fule!" growled Sanderson, stooping to pick up the half-spilt bottle—"daft fule! no' to ken gude drink when he tastes't!"

One and all felt their courage rise with the stranger's pusillanimity, and, quite forgetting work, off they ran, hunting the nimble-footed one, who this time did not halt so soon, but swiftly sped over the neighbouring field, leapt a hedge-row, and gained the highway, dashed on swiftly until he entered the village, and was not overtaken before he had gained the centre of the main street. Here he stumbled and fell, and was soon surrounded. Two or three sturdy fellows gripped him firmly,

and again he stood at bay, panting, puffing, and glaring at his captors, who were as much out of breath as himself. At this point a middle-aged rustic made a suggestion.

"The poor chiel's out o' breath. Tak' him into Tam Baird's, and gie him a gill of Tam's best."

And the speaker pointed to the publichouse, which stood a few yards distant.

Had a thunderbolt fallen at his feet, the piper could not have evinced more consternation, and, murmuring something in an unknown tongue, he cast one despairing glance at Tam Baird's. Tam himself was standing on the threshold grinning and talking. The sight was too much for the piper. Moaning miserably, he tore himself from those who held him, and again set off at full speed.

It was pretty evident by this time that the piper was a maniac: no rational being would conduct himself in so objectionable a manner. The general feeling, therefore, became one of fear lest, in his mad race, he should do some violence; and it was necessary for the public safety to secure him, which the reapers, now reinforced by rustics from the village, tried their best to do. But on he sped, his wild hair flowing, his hands waving—on he went, up the main street. Women and children, startled by the tumult, rushed out to gaze at him, and drew back screaming as he passed; men flung themselves in his path, in the hope of stopping him, but he nimbly avoided them. There was a general howl along the whole of his onward path. Whither would he fly? When would he halt? What would he do next? These questions were suddenly answered. The piper, casting one wild glance behind him, passed through an open green gate in a low wall, and ran into the minister's garden.

The crowd followed with a shout, feeling that capture was secure; but suddenly they stopped short, and became dumb. Crouching, at a little distance, under an apple-tree, was the piper, and a little nearer, between him and the people, stood the minister.

Now the Rev. Solomon Habbielove, then minister of Kirk, was a tall, severe-looking, white-haired old gentleman, who had the reputation of being a grand scholar, and who possessed great influence over his flock. Moreover, he was a kindly man, a great book-lover, and a rigid teetotaller. He abominated malt liquor, and held all spirits to be perdition.

"Hooly and fairly, hooly and fairly!" cried Solomon Habbielove, waving back the villagers. "What's the meaning of this commotion, and wha'—what *novum monstrum*—have we here?"

And he pointed at the glaring piper, who was flushed, and out of breath. In answer to the question, there was a great clatter of tongues: all spoke at once, and each drowned the words of the other.

"Silence! silence!" cried the minister. "I canna hear you if you all speak at once. You, Tammas Todd, step forward, and tell me what this means."

A tall, awkward billie shuffled forward in front of his companions.

"I canna tell muckle," he said, touching his bonnet. "A' I ken is jest this: yon chap's clean daft, and ca's himsel' a piper!—a piper!" he repeated, in supreme contempt. "He's daft as daft can be, and gif he's no taen haud of in time, he'll be doem' some ane a mischief."

The minister looked curiously at the piper, who shook his head emphatically, and said something in Gaelic, in which tongue Solomon, with an appearance of sudden interest, immediately replied. Ere long the piper repeated the pantomime of opening his mouth, pointing down his throat with his forefinger, and imitating the act of drinking.

"*Querit aquas!*" murmured the minister, approvingly; and he added, in a low voice, "Janet, Janet!"

At the call, a cleanly serving-woman came running out of the manse.

"Janet, woman, a jug of cold water and a glass tumbler."

With an amazed stare at the piper, Janet ran back into the house, and soon returned with the water. Irradiate with joy grew the piper, as the minister poured out the limpid fluid; he evinced no dislike and horror now, but drained tumbler after tumbler with rapturous eye-rollings and audible cat-like purrings. When the jug was emptied he glared around him like a refreshed warrior, and again spoke to the minister in the same strange language. Solomon Habbielove evinced more and more amazement and eager interest, and at last, turning to the villagers, he spoke as follows:

"Wonderful are the ways of Providence! Our friend here, poor body, is nae maniac, as ye would hae me believe, but just a poor Hieland piper, who brings to me a tale of wonder, a tale of abomination, a tale of mystery! Gang your ways, honest folk! Donald will come ken the house with me, to partake of my frugal fare, and ye shall hear what ye shall hear another time. *Quid sit futurum cras, as Horatius saith, fuge quærere!*"

So saying, Solomon motioned to the reapers, who retired slowly and unwillingly, grumbling audibly, through the green gate. Their curiosity was awakened, and they did not like to be baffled; but they had not courage to resist boldly. Closing the gate upon them, Solomon seized the piper by the arm, led him into the house, to the horror and amaze of the cleanly Janet, and escorted him into the *sanctum sanctorum*, or study. There the two worthies remained closeted for hours, in earnest conversation; and Janet, peeping through the keyhole, saw the piper gesticulating as he spoke, while

Solomon wrote rapidly on foolscap paper. The subject of the conversation did not long remain a secret, but resulted in the following extraordinary narrative :

His name, the piper said, was Donald Mactavish, and he was born in Inverary, where Dougal, his father—honest man—was piper to the great Duke of Argyll. One's stomach screamed with joy to hear Dougal play "Macpherson's Reel," or "Tullochgorum;" he was the prince of pipers; and people said that the reason Inverary was so virtuous a place, was chiefly owing to Dougal's music, which was so heavenly that the spirits of darkness couldn't bear to hear it. Donald was the eldest of a small family, and it was the household dream that to him the pipes should descend by inheritance on his father's death; so before he was ten years old, Donald had actually a little instrument of his own, and strutted before the duke, playing right boldly, clad in the Argyll tartan—dirk and philabeg, all complete. He was a thoughtful boy, and a reader of the few Gaelic books which came in his way; but his mind was chiefly fed by the wild tales of the Argyll clansmen, and the strange legends of the Loch Fyne fishermen. When a mere child, he would wander out into the woods and glens, and seating himself on some heathery knoll, play soft tunes on his little bagpipes; and all the while he would dream that the pixies and wee fairy folk would come tripping over the heather, and tumbling out of the blue-bells, to hear his dulcet music. As he grew older, however, this visionary amusement gradually grew staler and staler; and, instead of a poetical musician, Donald became a rough, frisky lad, fond of tippling barley-bree, and sporting with the lasses. Many a raid did he take among the mountain stills! many a moonlight night sat he under slanted sheaves, with his arms around a yielding waist! He was never over-bonnie of face; but because he was strong, and witty, and roguish, and bold, and born, moreover, of the great Mactavishes, the lassies overlooked his flaming head of hair, and rough-hewn features. As his chin grew rougher and bristlier, his pranks grew wilder and merrier; at last, one fine day, when he was full-grown, he committed a folly which gave grievous offence to the big duke, who ordered him to depart from Inverary forthwith. For his father's sake, Donald did not dare to refuse, and he bade home and parents farewell. Dougal tore his hair, and danced about like a salmon on a fishing-hook. Och ish O, och ish O! the Mactavishes had been the big duke's pipers ever since there had been no big dukes at all; he was growing old, and he had dreamed that Donald would succeed him; and Och ish O! that the Mactavish glory should be brought to the dust by his own son. But, alas! there was no help for it. Donald set forth into the wide world—all his wealth being a bag of oatmeal, a bottle of whiskey, three kippered Loch Fyne herrings, and his father's second-best bagpipes.

Ay; but what treasures had Donald Mactavish—poor though he seemed! Blest with youth, health, and the bagpipes, he had nothing to fear; and, moreover, his misadventure had taught him the virtue of caution. Nature had made a musician; fortune had made him a piper; so the good stars met in his horoscope, and gave him magic power over the human heart. Northward he wandered, trudging from clachan to clachan, paying his way with sad music or merry, glorifying bridals or solemnising funerals, and winning the wonder of old and young. Though he was a wanderer, glory waited on him, for the mantle of the Mactavishes had fallen on his shoulders! Far and wide he roamed—sleeping where he could, eating and drinking at the public cost—rambling up hill and down dale, whithersoever he pleased. Everywhere there were cries of amaze and admiration; honours crowded on the kilted musician; though some few envious rascals vowed that he was in league with his Satanic majesty. Nay, Donald, and no other—so he himself asserted—was the identical piper who, meeting Maggie Lauder going to Fife, played her the tune to which she danced so lustily, and which elicited from her the famous compliment:

“ Weel hae ye played your pipes, quo Meg,
Your cheeks are like the crimson,
There's nane in Scotland plays so well,
Since we lost Habbie Simpson!” *

From the Highlands Donald journeyed into the Lowlands, where the instrument he played was less liked. He managed, however, to play his way from village to village, and to popularise the pipes wherever he went. The people laughed at his quaint appearance, but his music made them loup with pleasure. When he reached Kilbarchan, he paused opposite Habbie's statue, and played for a summer afternoon with such effect that the stone piper seemed to turn alternately green with jealousy and pale with wonder; so, at least, quoth Donald himself.

This vagrant life could not last for ever. Gradually Donald began to get tired of roving about from place to place, and longed to stretch his weary limbs at some quiet fireside. He had always loved the lassies—nay, had not this very love made him an exile?—and Och, to pree the honeyed lips, and encircle the winsome waist of some strapping hizzie in her teens! While this yearning was strong in him, he entered, with plaid flying and pipes playing, the little village of Drumbungo, which lies a few Scots miles from Glasgow city. Men, women, and children, rushed out to see him, and followed him, charmed by his wild strains, to the village green, where a dance was improvised. Loud was the merriment; reels, strathspeys, foursomes,

* The most notorious of Scottish pipers. His statue is to be seen in the town of Kilbarchan, in Renfrewshire.

followed each other in rapid succession. Meantime Donald blew with might and main, until his cheeks glowed like fire; but all the while his eye was fixed on one trim figure, whom he had singled out from the throng, and who wore only the petticoat, short gown, and tartan shawl. Och ish O, said Donald, she was fair to see! Her eyes were black as the sloe, her cheeks were red as hips and haws, her waist was slim as the willow, and her straight bare leg was whiter than new milk. She danced, she louped, she snapped her fingers, she tripped and whirled, and all the while she exchanged love-looks with Donald, who fidgeted with admiration. Gloaming came; a wink brought the lassie to Donald's side, and they sat down together in a corner of the green. Sweet were the whispers of the wondrous piper, albeit he then knew only a few words of the Doric, for his music had thrilled into the lassie's heart, which was throbbing wildly with a new emotion. "Ponnie lassie, ponnie lassie, wilt thou gang awa wi' the piper?" While she hesitated, he struck up softly "O'er the hills, and far awa'." This was too much—it surpassed all the eloquence of senates. The Lowland lassie trembled, blushed a sweet consent, and fell into the arms of the triumphant Mactavish. With plaids flying, and pipes playing softly, off they crept together, under the shadow of the darkness, and in Glasgow they were wed.*

Luckily, as Donald thought, Jeanie proved no fruitful vine; and the Mactavishes were childless. Pursuing his amatory vein, Donald settled down for some years in Glasgow, where he supported himself and wife by assisting at private and public gatherings. Here he made the acquaintances which, as he asserted, became the bane of his whole future life; for here, night after night, he began to carouse whiskey in company with Souter Macpherson, of the High Street, and Alistair Macdonald, the sexton of the cathedral—two sinewy Celts, who had long been settled in Glasgow, and who possessed, in addition to Highland craft and boldness, all the Lowland love for sly tipp'ing. The morals of the Mactavish again ebbed lamentably away; his nose reddened, his face grew crimson, and—as he himself rightfully expressed it—he was "aye dram-dramming." Is it to be wondered at that the good wife stormed, threatened, wept, and lamented the hour when she had been led into grief by the Highlandman? and that again and again she broke in upon the scenes of revel, and favoured Alistair and the Souter with language more strong than elegant? Donald tried to pacify her by behaving a little better; but no, the household demon was fairly aroused, and Jeanie, having once become a tartar, was doomed to remain one for ever. Things became so bad that Donald more than once thought of suicide, but lacking courage

* If Donald's story be not taken *cum grano salis*, it is no fault of mine; but let it be remembered that he himself was the sole authority for all the incidents, as told to the Rev. Mr. Habbieclove.

he lived on, receiving all sorts of wifely gifts, from hard words to porridge-bowls, from boiling abuse to boiling water. "Thraw her neck," suggested the Souter. "Skirt awa' pack to ta Hielans," advised Alister. One night Donald took the latter advice, and made the best of his way to Inverary; but on arriving there, he found, to his consternation, that Dugald was dead, and that a new piper—not, alas! a Mactavish—had been elected in his stead. Without revealing his identity, Donald hastened away, and for some days was a wanderer; but fate guided him back to a certain hostelry in the High Street of Glasgow, where he found his two cronies seated over their gills. Trembling in every limb, he listened as they informed him of the danger that awaited him: that the wife, fairly daft, was searching for him high and low, that she had vowed to beat him into a mess of porridge, and that she was more like a mad woman than a decent body. Donald groaned, but with a few gills of whiskey came fresh courage; and, by-and-by, he so far forgot his peril that he laughed, shouted, sang, and played "Tullochgorum" on his pipes. At last the clock of the cathedral struck twelve—the hour after which the public-house must be closed. The cronies looked at one another, puzzled by the question—whither was Donald to betake himself for the night? Both the Souter and Alister were married men, and more or less under subjection; so that neither dared to offer the piper a night's lodging. Short was the time given them to deliberate; for suddenly there came a loud knocking at the street-door, and the voice of Jeanie herself was heard fiercely demanding admittance. The whiskey ebbed from the heart of Donald, and his cheek became ghastly pale.

"Och ish O!" he groaned, "it's the wife!"

"Rin, Tonald, rin!" cried the other two. "Rin oot at the pack-door!"

Without hesitating for a moment, Donald made a rush in the direction indicated, and was closely followed by the others, who were almost as much afraid of having their crowns clawed as he was. A minute afterwards, they were threading the numerous lanes and alleys in the neighbourhood of the High Street, pausing every minute to listen for the footsteps they dreaded to hear behind them. Ere long they came forth into the open moonshine, and saw, at a short distance before them, the tall turrets, great windows, and belfry of the cathedral—part lying in dusky shadow, part glistening in the silver light.

"Ochone, ochone!" groaned Donald, falling on the Souter's bosom. "Ochone! Nainsell would gi' all the great Duke's bawbees, if she could flee awa to a land wi' neither wives nor lassies, and wi' naething to drink but heavenly Isla whiskey."

To Donald's amaze, Alister gave a great shout, slapped his leg, and

threw his bonnet up in the air. Be it remembered here, that all the cronies were far gone in liquor.

"Tonald Mactavish," said Alister, solemnly, "hae ye a Hielan' heart? or were ye suck't on the sour milk of a Lowland cuddy?"

"She's Hielan', Alister, my man—Hielan' frae the big tae to the wee purlie!" said Donald.

"Then come awa'."

So saying, Alister led the way through a small gate entering into the spacious burial-ground which surrounded the cathedral; and threading a devious path among the graves and monuments, crept close to the cathedral walls, which were in deep shadow. It was not in the nature of Donald or the Souter to fear the supernatural; they had much more dread for living goodwives than for lifeless ghosts. So they followed boldly. At last, Alister halted before a low door, which he opened with a great key, drawn from his coat pocket, and revealed a dark passage, into which the others peered curiously.

"Stay here a wee," he said, "till I get my light;" and, creeping away, he disappeared in the darkness; but speedily returned, carrying in his hand a lighted lantern.

"Now, Tonald Mactavish," he asked seriously, "ye wad gie muckle to get awa' frae the wife?"

"Gie!" echoed Donald. "She wad gie the kilts aff her hurdies, and a heap mair."

"Atweel," said Alister, "has she no' tell't ye aften, that under the cathedral o' Glasgow, the wee fairy folk langsyne puilt a strange lang road—ta Teil kens whaur she gangs to; maybe till a land o' whiskey neat and putter'd croutie, maybe till the Teil hersel'. Atweel, will the Mactavish risk the road—maybe to dee the death, and maybe to be the happiest piper frae Maidenheid to Shon o' Groats?"

Donald hesitated; but he thought of Jeanie, and nerved his courage to the sticking-point.

"She'll gang!" he cried, stepping into the passage.

"Haud a wee, haud a wee!" said Alister. "Nane but your nainsell can gang wi' ye ayont this door; but wheesht! tak' the lantern—sae! Gang on till ye come till the pig vault, and keep your een on the groun', till ye see a square stane wi' an airn ring; pu' up the stane, and ye'll see a stair that gangs toon—toon! Tonald Mactavish," continued Alister, with emotion, "gie's your han'! Maybe she'll never see ye mair, and maybe aye; put this she'll say—ye're a piper ta Teil hersel' wad be proud o'!"

Alister seized one of Donald's hands, and the Souter seized the other.

"Got pless ye, Tonald!" said the Souter. "Hae ye the pipes a' safe?"

"Ay, ay," replied Donald, blowing softly into the tubes, while they groaned again. Meantime, the Souter seemed undergoing a violent inner struggle, in which generosity at last conquered.

"Ye're gaun a lang road, Tonald," the Souter whispered, pressing something into his hand. "Maybe ye'll be dry afore ye reach the end; sae—tak' ta pottle! She's Isla, Tonald, every drap. She couldna gie a ponnier gift to her ain faither."

The piper wrung the outstretched hands of his cronies, grasped the lantern, and stepped boldly into the passage. In a moment, the door was closed behind him, and he heard the key turned in the lock from the outside. His heart gave a thick throb, but he stepped on—feeling his way through passages of chilly stone, on which the light of the lantern shed a faint yellow gleam. 'Twas not his first visit to the place: more than once, in the day-time, he had roamed through the vaults with Alister; but it was his first visit by night; and he himself confessed afterwards, that he felt slightly nervous, and fearful of a vision of the sheeted dead. The spirit of whiskey, however, triumphed over caution; and Donald found himself contemplating the square paving-stone with the iron ring, which had been described to him by Alister. Is it to be wondered at that he took, at this point, a deep draught of the black bottle—the gift of the Souter?

All was still as death; above and around all was dark, but the lantern's gleam fell on the paving-stone below. With beating heart, Donald grasped the ring and raised the stone, revealing to view a dark flight of stone steps, which descended, as it were, into the dark bowels of the earth. With a brief muttered prayer, Donald descended—down, down, down, down! The steps were steep and slippery; and more than once he was on the point of being precipitated to the bottom. At last, however, he stood on firm earth. By the light of the lantern, he discovered that he was in a large vaulted chamber, in one corner of which stood a large door. Written on the door, in antique characters, was the following inscription:

"This awesome gate
If any dare enter,
He'll no' be blate
If he reach the Centre.
If he reach the End
May the stars befriend,
For I doubt, I doubt,
He'll ne'er get out."

With a great effort, Donald managed to spell out the above; but he could make no sense of it. It was clear as daylight, however, that here was the entrance to the mysterious underground passage.

Creeping close to the door, Donald saw that in the lock thereof was a huge key. At this point, he again found it necessary to have recourse to the black bottle, thanks to whose courage-inspiring contents, he had courage to turn the key in the lock—a task which taxed all the strength of his sinewy arms. With a dull groaning sound, the door flew open, revealing to view a dark, dangerous-looking cave; and the instant Donald entered, the great gate closed behind him with a bang, the lantern was dashed from his hand by a gust of wind, and he was in total darkness.

The Legend of the Mysterious Piper.

IN TWO PARTS.

PART II.

THUMP! THUMP! went the heart of the Piper, as he stood panting and trembling in the dark. Bitterly did he repent his rashness—tremulously did he long for the company of even the tyrannical Jean. Too late! To recede was impossible: he must on, or die. The strong wind blowing on his face strengthened him with the hope that the passage possessed some contiguous outlet; possibly, it might communicate with the open air. After groping about for his lantern, and finding it broken and extinguished, he stepped quickly forward. Dark, dark, pitch dark, was all around him, though the path seemed a broad and safe one. Whisht! He becomes conscious of a rustling sound, as of something sweeping quickly past him; and, at the same moment, something cold slaps him on the cheek. “Ha! ha!” shouts a voice in his right ear; “ho! ho!” screams a voice in his left. He gropes about him, but touches nothing; and the cold sweat stands in clammy beads upon his forehead. He tries to mutter a prayer; but his voice fails him, and he goes staggering forward. “How’s a’ wi’ ye?” groans a sepulchral voice behind him; and a hundred voices seem to answer the query with a peal of echoing laughter. Donald groans, for he thinks he hears the voices of the dead, and every moment expects to be confronted by a legion of apparitions. There is but one remedy, and that is the black bottle. Stopping short, Donald puts the bottle to his mouth, and, although it is half full, he drains it to the dregs. “Ha! ha!” laugh the voices. But a new soul has entered into the Piper, who is no longer appalled. The caves ring with the wild shriek by which he mimics and mocks the invisible ones. The blood of generations of Mactavishes boils boldly within him, and he utters a Highland howl. On he trudges. So reckless does he grow, that he grasps his pipes firmly, blows with might and main, and strikes up “Gillie Callum.” The vaulted passage rings with the wild music—and, hark! the voices join in chorus. Was ever such a fantastic melody! Donald fairly enters into the fun of the thing, and steps out in wild defiance. His invisible companions now begin to play new pranks. Unseen hands push him swiftly forward, unseen fingers pinch his bare legs and pull his hair, crawling things sit astride his nose; but, whensoever he makes an attempt to grasp any of the offenders, he grasps the empty air. Well, there is

nothing for it but to walk on, thinks he; and he does walk on, on, on, in the total darkness, along a passage that winds around and around through the bowels of the earth. There seems no prospect of the journey coming to an ending. At last, Donald is fairly wearied out—his strength dies away in one expiring screech of the bagpipes—his head whirls, and he loses consciousness. Then there is a long blank.

When Donald began to recover his senses, he became conscious of an indistinct chattering murmur, as of voices wrangling at a short distance; and he first fancied, with a shrill of horror, that his entrance into the underground passage had been all a dream, and that he was lying helpless at the mercy of Jean, the tang-tongued one. He was soon undeceived. He saw, on opening his eyes, a sight which caused him to rub them in amazement. Was he dreaming, or drunk? or both? Did he see actualities, or merely the phantoms of a vision? He was lying on his back upon a grassy knoll; high above him was the roof of what seemed a vast underground cave—a roof sparkling with shining crystal and glittering gems; and he was surrounded by some dozen living beings—the most comical little fellows he had ever set eyes upon in his life.

A dozen little wiry fellows, ranging from one foot to two feet in height, and all big of head and sinewy of limb. A dozen flaming-red heads of shock hair; a dozen pairs of long filmy ears; a dozen red pimply faces, ornamented with small pug noses, tiny blue eyes, and great good-humoured mouths; a dozen pairs of thin bony legs clothed above the knee in kilts of scarlet. The upper parts of their bodies were unclothed; the scarlet kilt, in fact, being their only article of attire. If their personal appearance was peculiar, their attitudes and gestures were no less so. Three out of the dozen were rolling on the ground, shrieking with immoderate laughter, holding their sides, and pointing at the Piper; but the other nine were sitting cross-legged at short distances from each other on the grass, gazing meditatively at the stranger, and puffing in philosophic manner at long clay pipes. Nothing seemed to disturb the composure of these latter. Had they been mortals, one would have decided that they were at that particular point of drunkenness when all the faculties become muddled, and grave egotism reigns supreme. They exchanged remarks in the usual style of pot-house worthies, the speaker withdrawing his pipe from his mouth at brief intervals, and delivering his words between the whiffs and puffs. Their voices seemed thick and harsh, and they spoke in some unknown tongue.

Again and again Donald rubbed his eyes, to assure himself that they were not making fools of his other senses; but no! he could not be mistaken. He sat up and looked around him. Above, far as the eye could see, stretched the high and glittering roof; and around, on every side, were grassy knolls and hills of sweet-smelling thyme.

Though the roof seemed of solid rock, and though there was no sun, all was as clear as daylight.

"My conscience!" murmured Donald, in Gaelic, "my conscience! where am I?" and he gazed at the dwarfs in eager inquiry. But the three merry ones only laughed the more merrily, while the nine philosophers smoked calmly, nodded to each other sagaciously, and looked sidelong at the stranger.

Donald's next proceeding was to rise to his feet, shake himself, nod familiarly to the philosophers, and wink at the merry ones. He then became conscious of excessive thirst, and, casting his eye around, saw to his joy a bubbling spring, which sparkled clear and fresh down the mossy sides of a rock close by. Snatching off his bonnet, he scooped it into a cup in Highland fashion, filled it at the spring, and lifting it to his lips took a deep draught. Spirit of Habbie Simpson! Why that amazed pause, that look of confusing delight and consternation? Why did Donald roll his eyes, smack his lips, and utter a cry of wonder? The spring at which he was drinking was not one of water, such as cools the thirsty traveller's lips in lonely places in the upper earth—it was one of *whiskey*!

And capital whiskey, too! Such whiskey as is seldom to be had for love or money—whiskey of a sweet savour, and mightily strong. Stout drinker though he was, Donald coughed and nearly choked with the draught; but he was too experienced to feel any sentiment for that rocky still but one of undisguised admiration. When he had drunk his fill he strode back to the dwarfs, and tried, by means of signs and nods and winks, to conduct a conversation; but the merry ones only laughed, and the philosophers smoked on. Presently, however, one of the philosophers rose gravely, walked to Donald in a very serious though zigzag manner, and, touching the bagpipes with the end of his clay pipe, peered up curiously into Donald's face. He was evidently puzzled by the instrument, and could not make out its use or nature. Finding all efforts to explain in words impossible, Donald grinned, and puffing out his cheeks, startled the echoes of that strange land with the merry strains of "Johnnie Cope." At the first notes, the three merry dwarfs began to frisk, dance, snap their fingers, and utter cries of delight, and, as the music continued, their gambols and capers grew wilder and more extravagant, until they rolled, fairly exhausted, on the ground. Meantime the philosophers had smoked on, only closing their eyes and smiling feebly, as if yielding to the blissful sensations awakened by the sweet melody. When Donald ceased, they opened their eyes again, and smoked on philosophically as if nothing had happened.

The merry ones now approached the philosophers and made some hurried remarks, which were responded to in monosyllables. At last, the philosophers nodded their heads gravely, and rising to their feet,

pipe in mouth, looked at the Piper. Donald was now made to understand, by the gestures of the whole twelve, that he was to accompany them somewhere or other; and, by a careless nod, he expressed his willingness to obey. He did not fail to note that all his new friends, and particularly the philosophers, seemed to have considerable difficulty in keeping on their legs. The three merry ones trotted along, beckoning him to follow, which he did rather unsteadily, for the crystal well had got into his head. The philosophers brought up the rear in single file, staggering gravely from side to side, and puffing still at their clay pipes.

This fantastic procession had not proceeded far before it was augmented by many other dwarfs, all presenting the same peculiarities of feature, and all clad in the kilt of red scarlet. Donald only glanced casually at the new-comers; but he noticed that some came rushing merrily with shouts of laughter down the thymy hills, while many rose gravely from the ground, where they sat quietly smoking. There were others, however, who presented more novel characteristics; not a few, for instance, were weeping. All were more or less unsteady in their gait.

Bigger and bigger grew the procession, Donald towering in the midst. Louder and louder grew the din of voices, until Donald was so deafened with the clamour that he struck up "The Campbells are coming." To this martial melody stepped, or rather staggered, the throng—an undulating mass of red hair and discord. At last they approached the banks of a little river, which sparkled coolly along through the greenery. Donald, who was now hot and perspiring, cast a longing eye at the stream, than which nothing could look more tempting; and encouraged by the example of many of the dwarfs, who had rushed to the bank and lain down on their faces to drink, he stooped down and dipped his face in the limpid wave. Amazement! Up jumped Donald, glaring fiercely. The river, like the spring, was composed of whiskey!

He had scarcely regained his feet when he found himself face to face with a little fat dwarf, whose attire and gestures showed him of greater dignity than the rest. A dwarf certainly as broad as he was long, and in length or breadth about two feet. His face was red and good-humoured, but his long white hair proved that he was of venerable age. In addition to the scarlet kilt, he wore a short cloak of red tartan, and a gilt crown, cocked rakishly on one side of his head. He was smoking a short cutty pipe.

This worthy bowed condescendingly to Donald, and addressed him, to his amaze, in language he could understand.

"Welcome, honest Piper," he said, "to the kingdom of the Ayfoos—a race o' whom you'll maybe hae heard up yonner on the earth, and o' which I hae the honour to be king. How's a' wi' ye?"

"How's a' wi' her?" asked Donald, with an indignant look. "She's gasping for a drink o' cauld water, for she's as dry as a kippered Loch Fyne herring."

"Water!" echoed the king, making a wry face—"water! Awa' wi' the graceless loon wha mentions that name in the land o' the Ayfoos. If ane of these folk"—pointing to the dwarfs—"had kenned your meaning, honest man, they'd drown ye in whiskey for an ungrateful knave. But come awa', come awa', come awa'! Dinna stand glowering there, but follow us. I hae long been in need of a court piper, and if ye behave yoursel like a decent man, your fortune's made."

Thoroughly confused and puzzled, Donald followed the king up the bank, where many Ayfoos were still lying, dipping their faces in the stream, and drinking deeply. His Majesty led the way to a heathery knoll at some little distance, on the top of which he seated himself, surrounded by some score of philosophers, who seemed his especial body-guard. On all sides stretched the crowd, talking and shouting, and Donald stood in the midst, opposite to the king. The latter waved his hand, and all was profound silence.

"Noo, honest piper, play awa', play awa'!" said his Majesty. "Stop a wee—what do they call ye?"

"Tonal'd Mactavish is her name in her ain country," answered Donald, assuming a respect, though he had it not.

"Gude!" said the king, nodding his head approvingly. "Weel, then, Donald, play awa'!"

The Piper needed no further bidding, but at once proceeded to show his skill. He commenced softly, with a few dulcet bars of "Roy's Wife;" then, by a natural transition, he passed off into the lively strains of "Maggie Lauder," and thence, through a variety of famous airs, gradually increasing in force and spirit, until he reached "Tullochgorum." He would have been no musician if he had not forgot everything in the enthusiasm awakened by his art; stronger and bolder grew his strains, until he was fairly compelled to dance an accompaniment. His example was first followed by the king, and finally by the greater part of the crowd, until Donald and hosts of his new friends were capering gaily to the strains of "Tullochgorum." Only the philosophers kept still, puffed their pipes, and looked on placidly. At last Donald sank down exhausted, and the music ceased. The king, falling back upon his heathery throne, panted hard, gazed admiringly at Donald, and tried to speak.

"Eh, man!" he gasped at last, rolling his eyes rapturously. "Eh, Donald Mactavish, you're a heavenly piper!"

Praise is praise from whomsoever it comes; and, moreover, his Majesty seemed so sincere that Donald could not help feeling flattered, so he laid his hand upon his heart and bowed his acknowledgments.

Just then a lugubrious-looking dwarf stepped up, and, muttering something unintelligible, seized Donald by the hand; then, with a lack-lustre look of unutterable affection, he placed his finger on his lips and walked away. He was followed by another, who approached wagging his head from side to side and weeping silently, but who suddenly caught Donald's eye, and, striking a pugilistic attitude, made a playful attempt to hit him upon the nose. He finally retired backwards, dancing from side to side, and kicking out feebly at vacancy. Whereupon the king laughed heartily, rose from his seat, and, taking Donald by the arm, led the way along the river-side. As they proceeded, followed by the crowd, his Majesty conversed in the most affable manner, and vouchsafed much interesting information. It was obvious that he was a dwarf of great intelligence, much superior to the bulk of his people. He himself had travelled much, he said, on the upper earth, for the purpose of studying the human mode of manufacturing whiskey, and in the course of his rambles he had learned to speak English; but the whole of his people were ignorant of any land beyond their own. Were there no female Ayfoos? Certainly not; the Ayfoos were immortal—that is to say, they could only perish with the earth itself, and there was consequently no necessity to perpetuate the species. They were daily renewed by means of the *elixir vitæ*, or whiskey of life. They were divided into several classes,—alike in feature, but differing in temperament and character. First came the philosophers, who deliberated on all the important affairs of state, drew up the code of laws, and were the cabinet advisers of Majesty itself. Next in rank were the fekters, or fighting body-guard, always ready on any emergency to do battle against an enemy. The remainder were divided into various brotherhoods—such as those who watered their whiskey with tears, those who were afflicted with poetic melancholia, and those who professed inviolable secrecy and eternal friendship. It was one of these latter who had shaken Donald so affectionately by the hand. In a valley by themselves dwelt the Amphibi, who lived half in the whiskey and half in the earth, and who were utterly destitute of reasoning faculties or intellectual self-consciousness.

It further appeared, from the king's conversation, that Donald was the only mortal who had ever ventured into that unknown region, with the single exception of a foolhardy baron, who, centuries before, had perished at the very outset of his adventure. Intelligence had been conveyed to the king that a second mortal had passed into his territories, and he was about to order the execution of the offender, when he was startled by the sound of far-away music, which he had at once identified as the sound of bagpipes. Now, the bagpipes being the instrument he loved of all others, he sent scouts to make inquiries, and the result was the discovery that the new-comer was a piper. His Majesty was delighted. Here was an opportunity of supplying a want

which he and his court had long felt. So he ordered the Piper to be knocked down, in order that he might not recollect his road of entrance, and to be as speedily as possible conveyed to the royal presence.

But how, asked Donald, was he, a poor mortal, to subsist?—what could he eat and drink?—how should he fulfil the requirements of his weak flesh? These queries were pooh-pooh'd by the king, who replied to them, however, as follows: That Donald, although a mortal, would be renewed by means of the elixir; that, to attain that end, he must consume as much of the elixir as possible; and that, in fact, the elixir was the only article of diet known among the Ayfoos, who, without it, would assuredly perish. Did his Majesty, then, think it possible that he (Donald) could actually exist—nay, even exist beyond the mortal term, by merely partaking of the whiskey of life? Certainly. In that case, thought Donald, affairs were not so bad as he had feared; the diet might be a little peculiar at first, but, after all, it would turn out advantageous. His face brightened. His only regret, he said, was that there was not a little to dilute the elixir, the latter being so confoundedly strong.

The king of the Ayfoos frowned.

“Donald Mactavish,” he said, “heavenly piper though ye are, beware! I hae warned ye once—I hae warned ye twice—but for the better guidance o’ your misladed spirit, look there!”

With these words, the monarch halted on a rude bridge, which crossed a narrow and slowly-flowing stream, and pointed downward. Donald gazed down upon the stream, and saw, to his surprise, that soft clouds of steam floated upward from the murmuring wave. A hundred yards farther on, the waters mingled with those of which he had previously drunk, and the two currents, united into one, flowed swiftly round a curve.

“This, Donald Mactavish, is the Aqua, a wee tributary o’ the river of which ye tasted, and which we ca’ the Vita. The waves o’ the Aqua are indeed composed o’ what mortals ca’ water, but with this difference, they’re aye *boiling hot*. Cauld water, Donald, is death to an Ayfoo. Noo, come awa, this way!”

His Majesty, followed by Donald and the dwarf-crowd, crossed the bridge, and walked swiftly in the direction of the spot where the two streams united; but, ere long, he entered the shade of a wood, and, after walking under green boughs for some distance, descended a rocky and precipitous path. At last, on arriving at the bottom of the descent, he entered a bright glen, and balancing himself on the edge of a huge rock, pointed upward. With a cry of wonder and admiration, Donald beheld a sight which, until then, had only been dreamed of by mortal brain.

High above him were snow-white cliffs, over which a foaming

cataract leaped with gorgeous sparkles, and fell with a soft sweet murmur into a huge basin scooped in solid rock below. Beside the basin grew a lemon-tree, which bent downward with heavily-laden branches, and occasionally dropped a golden lemon into the pool. Over this picture floated a soft stream, which formed itself into many fantastic shapes, and smelt very savoury in the nostrils.

While Donald was gazing upward in wonder, many of the dwarfs, climbing wildly over rocks and stones, approached the basin, lay down, and drank eagerly. Even the philosophers forgot their dignity, and partook with rapturous eye-rollings.

"These," said the king, proudly, with a wave of the hand, "these, Donald, are the Falls of Wuskitoddy, and you'll grant that they mak' a sweet picture. Wonderful are the provisions of nature, Donald! Above these cliffs, the Aqua and the Vita mingle, and, flowing downward, sweeten themsel's wi' the melting bits o' snowy rock. Run, my man, and taste o' yon rippling well, and gie's your candid opinion o' the manufacture."

Donald obeyed, and, bending over the basin, drank cautiously; but in a moment his face gleamed with joy, and he drank as eagerly as the rest. The waters were nectar newly brewed—a tippie divine enough for the gods—flavouring sweetly of sugar, and with just the tiniest dash of the lemon. As Donald returned to the king, he picked up a small fragment of the white cliffs, and placed it in his mouth. It tasted exceedingly like loaf sugar.

"Weel, Donald, weel?" exclaimed the king, when the Piper again returned to his side. Donald did not reply in words, but his countenance evinced his exquisite appreciation of the epicurean draught. Royalty smiled triumphantly.

What followed seemed to Donald a wild dream. Scarcely had he partaken of the nectar, when he began to feel unsteady on the legs. Then his head swam, and his veins become full of warmth and bliss. Striking up "Tullochgorum," he went dancing up the path by which he had descended, and was followed by the king of the Ayfoos and all his people. Selecting a grassy knoll, he placed himself in the centre, and discoursed his excellent music to the applauding crowd. Next, his head swam more and more, but, clearing suddenly, it left him in the mood called philosophic. Snatching a pipe from one of the philosophers, he seated himself cross-legged on the grass, and for some time smoked in silence. Suddenly recollecting, however, that he had on the upper earth a dear wife, whom he had not appreciated at her worth, he began to weep copiously. In the midst of his tears he looked at the king, and, impressed with the discovery that he had never seen a face so full of benevolence and sympathy, he sprang up, wrung his Majesty's hand, and swore eternal friendship. Unfortunately, the king happened to smile, which caused Donald such grievous offence,

that he started back fiercely, and was on the point of committing a personal assault, when the earth reeled under him, and he fell to the ground unconscious.

On recovering himself, he became conscious of racking headache, sore bones, and excessive thirst. His pipes had disappeared, and he was lying on his back under the cool shade of a lemon-tree. All around him were the crowd of dwarfs, and close to him stood the king. Bending over him, and feeling his pulse, was a smoking philosopher, whose countenance expressed deep meditation, and who said something in a low tone to his Majesty.

"Let the doctor see your tongue, Donald, my man!" observed the king, good-humouredly.

With a lugubrious grimace, Donald obeyed the mandate. A look of deep meaning passed over the face of the physician, who drew out a pair of small tablets, and wrote down the following prescription, of which the Piper was fortunate enough to get a glimpse—

"Die, aq. vit. ad lib. Nocte, poc. Whusktoddii."

FOUENEUCH, R. M."

Unfortunately, the above was quite unintelligible to Donald, who was soon to know, however, its full significance. Before he could remonstrate, a goblet of whiskey was poured down his throat, and, at the same time, the king, slapping him on the back, bade him be of good cheer. Donald looked rather lugubrious, for the time had come when his stomach revolted at the sight of the elixir; but there was no help for it.

Closing his eyes, he sank upon his back and meditated. It was clear enough that a longer residence in the country of the Ayfoos would prove fatal to him. Already he began to feel the pangs of hunger; his brain seemed on fire, and his eyes and throat were burning. What should he do? Shade of Habbie, how could he escape? He knew of no outlet from that strange land; and even if he had known, escape still seemed impossible. A deep groan escaped him, and he opened his eyes. To his horror, he saw the king stooping over him with another draught of the elixir. The sight was madness. In the despair of that moment, however, there occurred to him a wild idea, which he determined to carry out, even if the result should be fatal.

"Hold a wee, hold a wee!" he murmured, pushing back the outstretched hand.

"Drink, Donald Mactavish!" said the king, with paternal severity. "If ye neglect the prescription o' our ain doctor, the danger be on your ain head. If ye spurn the elixir, ye must dee."

"Och, she'll trink fast enough," gasped Donald, conjuring up a look of mock rapture as he gazed at the draught. "But hold a wee!"

She wouldna seem ungrateful. Gudeness kens she would choose to dwell aye in this heavenly land; but, for your Majesty's ain sake, tak' tent lest she prove the ruin o' your whole folk."

"What mean ye?" asked the king, with a suspicious frown.

"Dule to the day she cam' awa frae her ain country, where her ain kinsmen are like her nainsell. Dule, dule! swear that ye'll no' take her life if she tells ye the truth. Swear ye'll hae mercy on a puir mitherless lad wi' the curse o' the Hielans on her Hielan shouthers!"

"Speak, Donald Mactavish!" said the king, sternly. "We will be merciful!"

Donald clasped his hands, and raised his eyes upward with a look of mock appeal.

"She's a puir Hielanman, and ane wha's travelled far kens what the Hielans are famed for forbye whiskey? Och, ish, O! och, ish, O! Dinna be hard upon her, for as sure as she's a puir Hielan piper, she's got the Hielan——" Without finishing the sentence, he clasped his hands, and significantly scratched the back of the one with the fingers of the other.

Awful was the consternation, the anger, the horror, depicted on the countenance of the king of the Ayfoos. He called in a loud voice to the assembled dwarfs, who answered the call with one weird shriek of rage and terror, and then, clenching his hands and grinding his teeth, he was about to rush on the terror-stricken mortal. On second thoughts, however, he sprang back, shuddering, far out of the range of the Piper's person. The next moment Donald, who had fallen on his knees, received a blow from behind, which deprived him of all sense. He did not recover until he found himself, to his amaze, stuck in the middle of the wheat-sheaf, and gazing on the amazed reapers. He must have been conveyed upward, while insensible, through some mysterious hole in the earth, the presence of his person, dead or living, among the Ayfoos, being held, perhaps, dangerous and abominable.

Such was the story related by the Mysterious Piper, and I leave the reader to put upon it what construction he pleases. I have only a few more words to add. Some hours after the reapers had left the Piper with the minister, the latter ran down into the village, inquiring for his late companion, who had suddenly run away. But no one had seen the fugitive, and all search for him was unavailing. The Reverend Solomon, after fruitlessly examining the harvest-field in search of any inlet to the under-earth, made a pilgrimage to Glasgow, and sought in vain to discover Donald or his cronies. All he succeeded in ascertaining was that one Alistair Macdonald, twenty years before, had been sexton of the cathedral; of Jeanie Mactavish, or of the

Souter, he could find no traces. On returning to ——, he made the whole account public, and was immensely laughed at by the wiseacres. Some of the credulous, however, believed the story, and held it a striking sermon on the evils of intemperance.

What was the opinion of Solomon himself it is difficult to tell; but he was heard once to observe, that the man might or might not have been an impostor, yet there were more things in earth, and under the earth, than many dreamed of, and verily, whiskey was a fechless thing; yet if Donald, poor body, was an inventor, he was a genius in his way, to whom might be applied a parody of the words of Horatius, *Non tu corpus eras—sine spiritú.*

The Monk of Haldon : A Legend of South Devon.

By R. H. D. BARHAM.

"Near this town (Dawlish) are the remains of a chapel belonging, as it is said, to the distant parish of Sidmouth. It is built over, or more probably adjacent to, a well of great depth which has been for many years covered over; and from both being dedicated to Our Ladye there has arisen the corrupt term, Lidwell, by which the spot is now known. Marvellous stories of this desecrated well are narrated by the country people."—*Topographical Researches in the County of Devon* (MS. Brit. Mus.).

KIND READER, if ever your fancy incline
To visit fair Exeter's city and shrine,
Don't baulk her,—but start at a quarter past nine;
You'll get down in time for a stroll ere you dine,
And you'll find at the Clarence some very fair wine.

When lodged there, I pray,
Devote one fine day
To a visit to Haldon—it's not far away,
And the view and the air will your trouble repay;
Indeed, if you're hipped, out of spirits, or ill,
Better by pounds than a potion or pill,
Is a summer-day's run upon Haldon Hill.

Never, I ween, has fairer scene—
Sapphire-blue and emerald-green,
With the glow of the red red rock between,
Bathed in a glory of golden sheen,—
Gladdened your heart, or dazzled your een.
There tarry a while, and gaze your fill,
From Berry Head to Portland Bill;
Or turn your face to the north if you will,
Where the Dartmoor range lies gloomy and still,
And I'll wager a crown
When you get back to town,
Bright visions will haunt you of Haldon Hill.

Yes! it's all very fine
In the blaze of sunshine,
Or 'neath the mild lustre that gilds his decline
(I've to thank Mr. Canning for this latter line),
To lounge upon Haldon, or lie there supine:

When daylight goes,
C'est tout autre chose,—
 When darkness lowers and night falls chill,
 Steer clear, if you're wise, of Haldon Hill.

But supposing you now at the end of your ride,
 Leave your horse at the tower—there ask for a guide,
 And bid him proceed to the southern hill-side,
 Where, hid in a coppice of nut-trees and apple,
 The ruin still stands of a quaint little chapel.

It's not often shown,
 Nor very well known,
 And it's not very easy to find it alone:
 This I discovered on being despatched to it
 As a place with a rather strange story attached to it.

It stands on a spot
 Quite sheltered, but not,
 I should think, in the dog-days unpleasantly hot;
 While the heath and the broom
 Clothe the sides of the combe,
 And oppress, as Lord B. says, the air with perfume;
 Yet there it is left all deserted to rot,
 With not a house near, not a cabin or cot!
 Still more, when you gaze on the exquisite view from it,
 You'll wonder why folks so completely withdrew from it.

To the right, under Haldon,
 Lie Teignmouth and Shaldon,
 With hamlets, whose names to recount I'm not called on:
 Between them the Teign rolls her eddying flood,
 The stream looking tinted and turbid with blood;
 But it's only the rain that has stirred up the mud!
 It's certainly odd that this part of the coast,
 While neighbouring Dorset gleams white as a ghost,
 Should look like anchovy sauce spread upon toast!

We need not now pause
 To find out the cause
 Of this variation in natural laws;
 But Mr. Pengelly
 Can easily tell ye,—
 (I think, by the way, that the gentleman said,
 'Twas iron or manganese made it so red).

Then low at your feet,
 From this airy retreat,

Reaching down where the fresh and the salt water meet,
 The roofs may be seen of an old-fashioned street ;
 Half village—half town, it is—pleasant but smallish,
 And known, where it happens to be known, as Dawlish ;

A place I'd suggest

As one of the best

For a man breaking down who needs absolute rest,
 Especially too, if he's weak in the chest.

Torquay may be gayer,

But as for the air,

It really can not for a moment compare

With snug little Dawlish—at least, so they say here.

Well, ages ago, as the old people tell,

Was built this rude structure—half chapel, half cell ;

And I'm greatly inclined

To think it designed

To serve as a sort of a lighthouse as well.

And here, all the year,

With not a soul near,

(He found it uncommonly dull, I should fear),

In the meanest of robes, on the poorest of cheer,

A monk was deputed from Sidmouth to dwell ;

And the good man, 'tis said,

When retiring to bed,

Never blew out his candle, but placed it instead

In the belfry, some ten or twelve feet over head.

And when on the hills fog or thick darkness fell,

'Twas his duty besides to "attend to the bell ;"

He knolled and he tolled

All night in the cold,

A guide to belated folks crossing the wold ;

And many a traveller warned by the knell,

Blessed the good monk of Saint Mary's Well.

And when a monk died,

His place was supplied

By another, who slept in due time by his side.

So ever anon,

As time wore on,

A monk appeared and a monk was gone :

At length came one who was named Friar John !

Now Friar John was stout and strong,

His figure was rather broad than long ;

Some five feet six in his sandals he stood,—

Uncommonly short, but uncommonly good !

But then, to be just,—
 Confess it, I must,
 His features weren't what I've heard called *uppercrust*,
 But were vulgar and coarse—of a colour like rust;
 His hair, what he had, and he hadn't got much of it,
 If not a pure red, at least had a touch of it.

And some said his eyes,
 Unequal in size,
 Were like one and sixpence,—'Twas merely surmise;
 While other folks yet more maliciously hinted,
 The excellent man unmistakably squinted.
 I say 'twas *surmise*, for in study profound,
 He kept his eyes constantly fixed on the ground;
 Still enough could be seen
 Of his face and his mien
 To cause the young ladies a deal of chagrin;
 They one and all felt disappointment and pain
 That so good a man should be so very plain!

But one thing the neighbours could not understand,—
 Not a soul in the parish had seen his right hand!
 Whatever the office, when called on to minister,
 The hand that he used was always the sinister!
 They came to confess—
 He raised it to bless;
 The other was kept close concealed in his dress!
 Well, they said it looked odd, and they couldn't say less.
 But one hand or two,
 Not a monk of the crew
 Ever made with his bell such a precious ado—
 He pulled at the rope all the blessed night through!
 And then up aloft in the belfry he fixes,
 Not one wretched rushlight, but two pair of "sixes;"
 And though when he preached, I fear very few heeded him,
 'Twas agreed that in zeal none had ever exceeded him.

* * * * *

'Tis Christmas Eve, and the sun's red ball
 Sinks slowly, hid by a sable pall.
 In gathering darkness fades the light,
 And gloomy day in gloomier night—
 Gloomier where than on Haldon height!
 And the weather-glass shows a decided fall,
 And the sea-weed turns very wet on the wall.

The darkness increases,
 The rain never ceases,

But comes down in drops big as old penny pieces ;
 The winds from the west in a hurricane pour,
 And the thunder-clouds burst on the Tors of Dartmoor.
 The tempest yet heightens, and 'mid the turmoil
 A cry strange and fearsome sweeps down through the goyle ;*
 Full well knows the shepherd what sound it may be,
 And the shepherd's dog crouches and quakes at his knee.
 It comes—it has gone—borne by on the blast,
 The dog wags his tail—the dread *wish*† hounds are past !

Meantime, while the thunder above him is rolling,
 The monk of Saint Mary keeps zealously tolling,—
 A work which he's clearly engaged heart and soul in ;

When there falls on his ear

What he takes for a cheer,

Proceeding distinctly from somebody near ;

Then a voice loud and hoarse,

Using terms which, if coarse,

Were expressive, demanded admission in-doors,

With a hint, as 'twas rather inclement without, it

Would be quite as well if he looked sharp about it.

As the monk, at the sound,

Turning hastily round,

Gives a start, and then jumps to the door at a bound,

An observer might spy

A queer light in his eye

(Supposing, of course, an observer were by),

Which he lifts with a glance half triumphant, half sly

(N.B.—It was really a little awry).

He opens—there enters with “Thank ye, my hearty !”

What bagmen and “swells” call a seafaring *party*.

That sailor's bearing is pleasant to see—

Frank and free as a sailor's may be ;

His language, perhaps, is a trifle too free,

Abounding in words which begin with a D ;

All which I omit, for I don't see the fun of them,

And don't mean to sully my pages with one of them.

The monk took them coolly,

Perhaps, thinking truly

The tongues of your sailors are always unruly,

Perhaps he was just a bit deaf in these cases,

Perhaps thought them purely professional phrases ;

* Devonshire for a ravine.

† A sort of “Old Scratch” pack, which is said to hunt, by night, the country in the neighbourhood of Dartmoor.

Nor did it seem greatly his feelings to shock,
 When hailed by his guest as "a jolly old cock!"
 Friar John, indeed, showed himself vastly polite,
 Declared that he'd rung his bell long enough, quite,
 Then stepped to the belfry, and brought down the light,
 Addressed to the stranger a pressing invite
 To make himself happy and snug for the night;
 Bade him stir up the fire while he fetched a fresh log in,
 As 'twas really not weather to turn out a dog in,
 Then brought him a flagon to mix some hot grog in.

'Tis bootless to say
 How the night passed away,—
 How the convives, becoming familiar and gay,
 Drank out Christmas Eve, and drank in Christmas Day,
 How they finished the flask,
 Then went at the cask,
 How the monk told his legends of magic and mystery,
 While the sailor in turn gave some portions of his story:—
 That ten years ago he was kidnapped at Dover,
 And sent off to sea with Sir Rupert, the rover;
 That after a long spell of bloodshed and pillage,
 Sir Rupert attempted to sack a small village,
 That the natives took heart, resisted and beat him,
 And forthwith proceeded to cook him and eat him;
 That he, sailor Jack, with a few of the crew,
 Contrived in the mêlée to cut his way through;
 And that after more cruizing, at Plymouth he'd landed,
 And was now homeward bound by no means empty-handed:—
 "There's enough in that sack," Friar John gave a start!
 'Twas a little affection, he said, of the heart;
 "There's enough of rich gems and red gold," observed Jack,
 "To fit out a ship, stowed away in that sack!"
 "That sack?" gasped the monk, and he started again—
 (That heart of his caused him a good deal of pain,)
 "Gold and gems!—why, my son, grievous perils beset 'em—
 But, Good gracious me! where the deuce did you get 'em?"

Jack stretched out his throat—gave a singular grin,
 Drew his finger across it just under the chin,
 And replied, it was *that* way he'd "picked up the tin!"
 "What! cut people's throats,
 Like a sheep's or a goat's,
 Or a pig's! Bless my heart! is the man in his senses,
 To think we can wink at such grievous offences!"

As every one knows,
 I'm the last to impose
 Any very extravagant penance on those
 Who freely their little transgressions disclose;
 And as to the fees,
 People pay what they please,
 We seldom or never fall out about these;
 But murder! why, how do you hope to get clear of it?
 Suppose, my fine fellow, the Pope were to hear of it!"

Poor Jack looked alarmed at the aspect things wore;
 It never had struck him in that light before;
 He didn't mind taking his chance of a rope,
 But really he hadn't once thought of the Pope:
 "What's to be done? There's the booty—let's share it,
 Can't we in that manner manage to square it?"

The monk shook his head—didn't know—was afraid—
 'Twas a serious matter that throat-cutting trade—
 Well, he'd see—some arrangement perhaps might be made.

"Meanwhile," urges John,
 As a *sine quâ non*,
 "You must dip in the well, and you'd better come on.
 It's easily done,—when you've drawn up the bucket,
 You've only to bend down your head, and then duck it."

With sombre air and footstep slow,
 Passed the monk that portal low;
 He crossed the chapel's narrow aisle—
 Devoutly crossed himself the while;
 Thrice he stirred that chapel bell,
 Thrice the pond'rous clapper fell,
 As though to toll
 For a parting soul;
 And Sailor Jack shook in his shoes at the knell,
 As it heavily swung o'er the Holy Well.

Jack gazes down that dark profound—
 Its depth they have never been able to sound,
 It stretches away so far underground.
 But what makes him shrink
 As he bends to the brink?
 Is it the liquor he's taken to drink?
 Is it the flash of some instinctive thought, or
 Is it the unpleasant look of the water?

Or is it of imminent peril an inkling?
 Whatever it is—he springs up in a twinkling!
 He's in time and that's all—not a moment to spare!
 For behind stands the monk—his right hand in the air,
 And in it a poniard with blade bright and bare!

Down comes the blow—

“No,” says Jack, “it's no go,
 You don't quite come over a buccanier so!”
 And he fastens like death on the throat of his foe.

The monk tries to twist,
 By a turn of the wrist,
 His arm from the vice of the other's broad fist;
 He might have succeeded with “lubbers” or tailors,
 It's a different thing when the grip is a sailor's.

With sinew taut, and tough as yew,
 Face to face they stand—the two,
 Till that of the monk grows alarmingly blue!
 It's very distressing
 To find one compressing
 Your windpipe, which let's the pure air less and less in—
 And the monk hadn't breath enough left for a blessing.
 Jack tightens his grasp till he feels that he reels,
 Then tumbles him into the well neck and heels!
 And showing no sort of concern for the body,
 Goes quietly back and looks after his toddy.

The story got wind, and the folks far and near,
 Assembled one morning with queer-looking gear,
 And descended with ropes,
 And great hooks, in the hopes
 Of raising Friar John from his watery bier;
 But after much poking,
 And choking and soaking,
 In that dark abyss, it was truly provoking
 To find, when they dragged “the defunct” to the brim,
 That it wasn't the monk—'twas a great deal too slim,
 And did not bear any resemblance to *him*!
 So they went down again, and they picked up another,
 But this was no more Friar John than the other!

The monk

Must have sunk;

But then an embarrassing question arose—

If such was the case, who on earth could be those
 Whose presence so strongly affected the nose?

The matter throughout was with mystery blended,
 Some thought that Saint Mary her priest had befriended,
 While some for an opposite notion contended;
 The "Crowner" looked grave, and the inquest was ended,
 With "Drowned but not found—least said soonest mended!"
 They dismantled the chapel and melted the bell,
 And placed a huge stone on the mouth of the well;
 And moving the altar, imagine their wonder,
 At finding a hollow receptacle under,
 And filled, as Americans term it, with *plunder*!

As for Jack, from that moment an ill-fortune stuck to him—
 Nothing he did seemed to bring change of luck to him;

The results of his cruize

Went to sharpers and Jews,

So he set sail again to rob, murder, and booze,
 And after encount'ring wrecks, tempests, tornadoes,
 Was finally lost off the coast of Barbadoes.

Of the well thus defiled, should you search for the site,
 I much doubt if success will your trouble requite—
 I've known people look for it morning and night.*

Still by exploring,

And digging and boring

The spots all around you might hit on the right—
 If you wish, you can easily run down and try it;
 Yet perhaps on reflection, 'tis better, you'll own,
 To leave undisturbed that great slab of lime-stone,
 And minding the maxim, to—**let well alone!**

* I fancy at Teignton they show you a curious one,
 But it isn't the real well—it's only a spurious one.

La Haute Magie.

WE are accustomed to miracles in these days—miracles, that is, of science and human ingenuity and intellectual development; and we should probably not be surprised at any new discoveries or startling results which might be produced by the skill or wisdom of man; but it is somewhat astonishing to discover, as it has lately fallen to our lot to do, that some of the darkest practices of the old days of superstition and error are still in full force amongst us, in the very midst of our nineteenth century civilisation.

Will it be believed, that the black art, with all its enchantments, and its professed power of raising the devil, calling back the dead, and bewitching men, women, and cattle, is carried on in London at this present time, with as full a belief in its efficacy, and, it is asserted, with as great success, as in the ages when magicians and witches expiated their mysterious crimes at the stake?

We must honestly confess, that we should have been as ignorant of these strange facts as we venture to assume most of our readers are, had not a singular circumstance placed in our hands a very remarkable book which it is little likely they can ever have seen.

It is published in France—written in French, with a considerable sprinkling of Latin, and is withal utterly unreadable in ordinary society from the very unrefined nature of the details which it gives respecting the usages of modern Magic. At the same time it contains such startling revelations, and such curious information as to sorceries and witchcrafts in full vigour at the present era, that we think our readers will be interested by some account of its contents, duly cleared from all objectionable matter. The work is entitled, "*Dogme et Rituel de la haute Magie*," and consists of two goodly volumes, of which the first treats of the dogma, and the second of the ritual; both are illustrated—we cannot say embellished—by some frightful representations of diabolical agents and agencies, the most striking of them being an exceedingly unpleasant resemblance of the devil himself.

The book purports to have been written by a certain Eliphas Levi, who announces that he is himself a magician of the first class, who has successfully accomplished the most appalling mysteries of his forbidden art. How he manages to reconcile these pretensions with the statement which he also makes, that he is a member of the church of Rome we cannot imagine, inasmuch as that church, it is well known,

has always anathematised the practice of magic, and excommunicated any one who ventured to tamper with it.

The first volume, to which is prefixed a very singular representation of the supreme powers of good and evil, is uncommonly stiff reading; and it is rendered still more so by the bewildering inconsistency which pervades the whole. A mere cursory perusal of it would be very likely to leave an impression on the mind that it was a profound analysis of the highest mysteries of the Christian faith; but a closer examination soon shows that, so far as religious truth is concerned, it is really a solemn blasphemy from beginning to end.

The theory which the author seems to wish to promulgate is, that of the existence of an ancient philosophy—" *La Haute Magie*," older than all religions, which holds the essence of Truth—past, present, and to come—the key of the universe and the secret of universal power, in which is incorporated all that is true in the various creeds which have been or are known in the world, as well as in all such minor principles as those contained in freemasonry, the mysterious worship of the Templars, and in the secret societies of the middle ages. The whole of the first volume is devoted to an explanation of this philosophy, and of the manner in which one who should rightly comprehend it would become master of all the forces of nature, and of all created intelligences, whether belonging to this world or to unknown spheres. The following passages, taken almost at random, will show that we are not exaggerating the pretensions of this strange book.

"Behind the veil of all the mystic allegories of ancient dogmas, behind the mysteries and the strange ordeals of all initiations, under the seal of all sacred writings in the ruins of Nineveh and Thebes, upon the worn stones of ancient temples, and on the blackened face of the Sphinxes of Assyria and Egypt, in the monstrous or marvellous paintings which translate the sacred pages of the Vedas for the believers of India, in the strange emblems of our old books of alchemy, in the ceremonies of reception practised by all mysterious societies, are found the traces of a doctrine always the same, and everywhere carefully hid; this occult philosophy seems to have been the muse and mother of all religions, the secret lever of all intellectual forces, the key of all divine obscurities.

"There exists also in nature a force very differently powerful to that of steam, by means of which a single man, who should be able to seize upon it and to direct it, could change and overthrow the whole face of the world. This force was known to the ancients. It consists in a universal agent, of which the supreme law is the equilibrium of the great arcana of transcendental magic. By the direction of this agent one can change the order even of the seasons, produce in the night the phenomena of the day, correspond in an instant from one end of the

earth to the other, cure or strike at a distance, and give to a single word a universal power."

The author then proceeds to say, that it was this agent or force which was deified by the Gnostics, and adored in the infernal rites of the Sabbath, and the ceremonies of the Pagan temples; "in fact," he continues, "the subject of which we are treating is nothing less than the solution of all problems" (would it were!). "Whoever reads this book," he adds, "and understands it, it will make of him either a monarch or a madman; but, in any case, he will never be able either to despise or to forget it. If he is pure, it will be to him a light; if strong, a weapon; if holy, a religion; but if wicked, it will be to him an infernal torch, which will search his heart in piercing it like a dagger, and it will conduct him from despair to madness."

We have no intention of attempting to give our readers a resumé of the whole contents of this book, even although we do not anticipate that they would be visited by any of the dire results threatened by the author; but we shall content ourselves with extracting such portions as we think would be especially interesting to them.

On the 24th of July, 1854, the author informs us that he (Eliphas Levi), after having gone through all the long and formidable preparations necessary, did actually invoke a dead person, and succeed in bringing into his presence one who for many ages had slept the sleep of the grave; but, before he enters on an account of this event, he gives some of the theories of *La Haute Magie* on the subject of death, which are so curious that we subjoin them.

"Death," he tells us, "is a phantom of ignorance—it does not exist—all is alive in nature; and it is because all is alive, that all moves and changes incessantly in form. Old age is the commencement of regeneration—it is the working of the life which is renewing itself. The body is the garment of the soul. When this garment is completely worn out, or irreparably torn, the soul quits it, and does not resume it; but if, by any accident, this garment escapes from it, without being either worn or destroyed, the soul can, in certain cases, resume it either by her own effort, or with the assistance of another will stronger than her own. Death is neither the end of life, nor the commencement of immortality—it is the continuation and transformation of life. Now, a transformation being always a progress, there are few of the apparently dead who consent to live again, that is, to resume the garment which they have laid aside; and this it is which renders resurrection one of the most difficult works of the high initiation; also, its success is never infallible, and ought to be regarded as almost always something accidental and unexpected. To resuscitate a dead person, it is necessary to tighten suddenly and unexpectedly the strongest of those chains of attraction which can re-attach it to the form it has just left. It is necessary, therefore, to be acquainted, first

of all, with this chain ; next, to seize hold of it, and then to produce an effort of will sufficiently great to tighten it instantly, and with irresistible power. All this is extremely difficult ; but it is not in any way impossible. Nothing can enter heaven but that which comes from heaven. After death, then, the divine spirit which animated the man returns alone to heaven, and leaves upon the earth and in the atmosphere two corpses—one terrestrial and elementary, the other ariel and sidereal—the one already inert, the other animated by the universal movement of the soul of the world, but destined to die slowly, absorbed by the astral powers which have produced it. The terrestrial corpse is visible, the other invisible, to the eyes of terrestrial living bodies. . . . If the man has lived well, the astral corpse evaporates like a pure incense in mounting to the upper regions ; but if the man has lived in crime, his astral corpse, which keeps him prisoner, seeks again the objects of his passions, and wishes to return to life. He torments the dreams of the young, bathes himself in the vapour of blood newly shed, and drags himself round the localities where the pleasures of his life were experienced. He watches over the treasures he possessed and spent, he exhausts himself in painful efforts to make for himself material organs, and to live again, but the stars desire and imbibe him. He feels his intelligence growing feebler, his memory gradually becoming lost, his whole being dissolve itself. His former vices appear to him, and pursue him under monstrous forms. They attack and devour him. The unhappy being loses thus successively all his members, and dies for the second time and for ever, as he loses his personality and his memory. The souls which are to live, but which are not entirely purified, remain for a time more or less long, captive in the astral corpse. It is in order to disengage themselves from this corpse that these suffering souls enter sometimes into the living, and remain there in a state which the cabalists call embryo. It is these ariel corpses which are evoked by necromancy—it is these larvæ—substances dead or dying, with which we put ourselves in communication. But, to see those strange forms, one must be in an exceptional state, which partakes of the nature both of death and sleep, that is, one must magnetise oneself, and arrive at a sort of lucid and waking somnambulism. Necromancy, therefore, obtains real results, and the invocations of magic produce true visions. Often the preparations and the substances employed for the purpose are horrible, but the results are never doubtful. Certain cabalists distinguish apparent death from real death, and believe that they rarely come together. In their opinion, the greater number of persons who are buried are alive, and those who are believed to be living are dead. Incurable madness, for instance, is an incomplete but real death, which leaves the terrestrial body under the direction, purely instinctive, of the sidereal body. If the human soul were to undergo a violence which she could

not bear, she would separate herself thus from the body, and would leave in her place the animal soul, or the sidereal body. The dead of this species are recognised, it is said, by the complete extinction of the moral sense. They are not wicked, but they are not good. They are dead: they are poisonous mushrooms of the human species, who absorb as much as they can the life of the living, and that is why their approach deadens the soul, and chills the heart. These cadaverous beings—if, indeed, they exist—realise all that one has heard of wehrwolves and vampires. Are there not beings near to whom one feels oneself less good, less intelligent, sometimes even less honest? Are there not some whose approach extinguishes all belief and all enthusiasm—who bind us by our weaknesses, prevail over us by our evil impulses, and make us slowly die to the moral sense? These are the dead whom we imagine to be living—these are the vampires whom we take for friends!"

With this agreeable piece of information as to the society in which we are unconsciously moving, M. Eliphas Levi terminates his theories on the subject of death, and proceeds to give us, in the following manner, an account of the occasion on which he himself brought back a tenant of the grave to this world:

"In the spring of the year 1854 I went to London to escape domestic chagrins" (perhaps there is a Madame Eliphas Levi who does not approve of *La Haute Magie*) "and to give myself up without distraction to science. I had letters of introduction to eminent persons curious on the subject of revelations from the supernatural world. I saw several of them, and found in them, with much courtesy, a great foundation of indifference and frivolity. They asked of me at first prodigies like those of a charlatan. I was a little discouraged, for, to tell the truth, far from being disposed to initiate others into the mysteries of the magic ceremonial, I had always feared for myself the mistakes and the fatigues to which it exposes one, and, besides, those ceremonies require materials which are both costly and difficult to collect. I gave myself up therefore to the study of '*La Haute Cabale*,' and thought no more of the English adepts, till one day, on returning to my hotel, I found an envelope addressed to me. This envelope contained the half of a card cut through the middle, on which I recognised the characters of Solomon's seal, and there was also a very small piece of paper, on which was written in pencil, 'To-morrow at three o'clock before Westminster Abbey you will be given the other half of this card.' I went punctually to this singular rendezvous—a carriage stood at the place—a servant advanced and beckoned me to approach while he opened the door of the carriage; in the carriage was a lady dressed in black, whose bonnet was covered by a very thick veil. She made me a sign to place myself beside her, showing me the other half of the card which I had received. The door was shut, the

carriage rolled away, and the lady having lifted up her veil, I saw that she was aged, and that she had under her grey eyebrows black eyes of an extraordinary fixedness and keenness. 'Sir,' she said, with a strong English accent, 'I know that the law of secrecy amongst adepts is very rigorous. A friend of Sir B—— L—— who has seen you, knows that you were asked for some manifestations, and that you refused to satisfy their curiosity—perhaps you had not all that was necessary. I am going to show you a complete magic chamber; but I must ask of you first of all the most inviolate secrecy; if you do not give me this promise upon your honour I shall give the order to re-conduct you to your abode.' I gave the promise required of me, and I am faithful to it in giving neither the name, nor the rank, nor the address of this lady, whom I soon recognised as one of the initiated, not perhaps of the first order, but of a very high grade. We had several long conversations, during which she insisted always on practical demonstrations to complete the initiation. She showed me a collection of magical instruments and vestments, and lent me several curious books of which I felt the want. Finally, she decided me to attempt at her house the experience of a complete invocation, for which I prepared myself during twenty-one days by observing scrupulously the rules given in the thirteenth chapter of the Ritual."

The author details these preparations, but they are too long to be enumerated; it is certain, however, that any one going through them must be very much in earnest, as they include severe fasting, rigorous silence, and other ascetic practices, besides a concentration of the mind on the deceased person to be invoked, which it would require no small courage and self-denial to attempt.

"All was finished," he continues, "on the 24th of July, the intention being to invoke the phantom of the divine Apollonius Tyaneus, and to interrogate him on two secrets, one of which concerned myself, and the other was a matter of interest to the lady of whom I have been speaking. She had intended at first to assist at the invocation with a confidential person; but at the last moment this friend took fright, and as unity in the person of one, or a trinity in the persons of three, is rigorously required for the rites of magic, I was left alone.

"The small room prepared for the invocation was built in a turret; in it were placed four concave mirrors, and a sort of altar of which the white marble top was surrounded by a chain of magnetised iron. Upon the white marble was engraved, and gilt, the sign of the pentagramme as I have represented it in this book"—(the representation shows two triangles, so placed as to form a six-point star, with certain cabalistic figures, incomprehensible to us, marked upon it)—"and the same sign was traced in divers colours upon the white skin of a newly-slain lamb, which was extended under the altar. In the centre of the

marble table there was a little brazen vessel, with charcoal of elm and laurel wood, and another was placed in front of me on a tripod. I was clothed in a white robe somewhat similar to that worn by our Catholic priests, but longer and more ample, and I wore on my head a crown of mistletoe interlaced with a golden chain. In one hand I held a new sword, and in the other the Ritual" (we conclude he means his own book). "I lighted the two fires with the prepared and necessary substances, and I began, in a low tone at first, but raising my voice by degrees, the invocations of the Ritual. The smoke extended; the flame made the objects which it lighted seem tremulous; then it died out; the white smoke rose slowly upon the marble altar; it seemed to me that I felt an earthquake; there was a singing in my ears, and my heart beat violently. I put some branches and perfumes in the vessels, and, as the flame rose, I saw distinctly before the altar the face of a man larger than life, which dissolved and disappeared. I recommenced the invocations, and I placed myself in a circle which I had before traced between the altar and the tripod. I then saw that the interior of a mirror which was in front of me had become bright, and a white form appeared in it growing gradually larger, and seeming to come nearer. I called Apollonius three times, closing my eyes, and when I opened them a man was before me enveloped from head to foot in a sort of winding-sheet, which seemed to me rather grey than white. His face was thin, sad, and without beard, which did not quite agree with the idea I had formed of Apollonius. I felt a sensation of extreme cold, and when I opened my mouth to speak to the phantom, I found it impossible to articulate a single word. I put my hand then upon the sign of the pentagramme, and I directed towards him the point of the sword in commanding him mentally not to terrify me, and to obey me. Then the form became confused, and disappeared suddenly. I commanded him to return; then I felt, as it were, a breath pass me, and something having touched the hand which held the sword, my whole arm became immediately numbed to the elbow. I thought I understood that this sword offended the spirit, and I planted it by the point in the circle near me. The human face immediately reappeared, but I felt so great a feebleness in all my members, and such a sudden faintness take possession of me, that I took two steps to sit down. So soon as I was seated I fell into a profound stupor, accompanied by dreams, of which there remained when I came to myself only a confused and vague remembrance. My arm was for some days benumbed and painful; the figure had not spoken to me, but it seemed to me as if the questions I had to ask him had solved themselves in the interior of my own mind. To the question of the lady, an internal voice answered in me, 'Dead.' It concerned a man of whom she wished to have tidings; for myself, I was anxious to know if a meeting and reconciliation were possible

between two persons of whom I thought, and the same internal echo answered pitilessly, 'Dead.'

"I narrate these facts precisely as they took place—the effect of this experience on me was quite inexplicable. I was no longer the same man, something of another world had passed upon me. I was no longer either gay or sad, but I felt a singular attraction towards death, without being, however, at all tempted to have recourse to suicide. I analysed my feelings carefully, and in spite of a nervous repugnance, very keenly felt, I reiterated twice, with only the interval of a few days, the same trial; the recital of the phenomena which occurred would differ so little from that which I have just given, that I will not add them to this narration, already perhaps too long; but the result of these two other invocations was to procure for me the revelation of two cabalistic secrets, which could, if they were known to every one, change in a short time the foundations and laws of society altogether. After the last invocation I read again, with great care, the 'Life of Apollonius,' whom the historians represent to us as an ideal of beauty and classical elegance. I remarked that Apollonius, at the close of his life, was shaven, which accounts for the absence of beard in the phantom; and tormented a long time, which explains the sadness and thinness of his countenance. I saw afterwards two other personages, whom it is not necessary to name, and both were different in their costume and appearance from what I expected to see them. I recommend, however, the greatest reserve to persons wishing to attempt similar invocations; they produce great fatigue, and often agitations sufficiently abnormal to cause nervous illness."

We must leave our readers to decide for themselves what weight they are disposed to give to this extraordinary recital, but it is certainly sufficiently strange to find a man of our own day soberly, and with apparent good faith, detailing an interview with Apollonius Tyanæus.

It will have been seen that Eliphas Levi has nothing in common with spiritualism, but he incorporates this phase of the (so called) supernatural into his theories, along with everything else of the same description, and his manner of accounting for its apparent wonders is very curious.

"The astral light," he tells us, "is saturated with souls which are disengaged from it by the incessant generation of human beings. These souls have imperfect wills, which can only be dominated and employed by wills more powerful than their own. They form, then, long invisible chains, which can cause great elementary disturbance; the phenomena known to have been caused by magic, and quite recently again by M. Endes de Mirville, have no other cause. These elementary spirits are like children, they torment most those who occupy themselves about them, unless they are dominated by a high

intelligence and a great severity. These are the spirits whom we designate under the name of occult elements. It is they who determine for us our unquiet or strange dreams, and who produce the movements of the divining rod and the rapping against walls or furniture. They act ill or well indifferently, because they have no free will, and, consequently, no responsibility; they show themselves to ecstasies and somnambulists under incomplete and fleeting forms. They were the cause of the nightmares of St. Anthony, and probably of the visions of Swedenborg. They are neither guilty nor condemned. They are curious and innocent. One can use or abuse them like animals or children; therefore the magician who employs their services assumes a terrible responsibility, for he will have to expiate all the evil which he causes them to commit, and the greatness of his torments will be proportioned to the extent of the power which he has exercised by their means."

This statement reminds us of a somewhat similar explanation of the supposed phenomena of spiritualism, given by one of our best modern writers in a novel in which the subject is introduced. He seems to consider, that while imposture has a large share in the strange results which appear to have been produced, yet that there are some facts which cannot be accounted for in this way, and these he attributes to the agency of an inferior order of demons, whom he quaintly designates as being "a low set." According to M. Eliphas Levi, however, *La Haute Magie* accounts for everything, reasonable or unreasonable, common or rare. By this means he explains the cholera and the potato disease, the phenomena of nature, political convulsions, revolutions, the wonders of science, the existence of pain, and the mystery of death. So great, indeed, is his familiarity with the inhabitants of the lower regions, that he is able to show for our edification a facsimile of the signatures of the principal devils. It may interest our readers to know, that while Satan himself writes a very firm business-like hand, some of the lower demons, whose education has doubtless been neglected, indulge themselves in representing their names by a variety of strange devices, of which pitchforks, spears, forked lightning, and tails detached from any visible body, are the most prominent.

It is a strange book, suggestive of many curious lines of thought and research; but, inasmuch as the mysteries and phenomena of the human mind are greatly more wonderful than any other subject of study, it seems to us that by far the most interesting question arising from it concerns Eliphas Levi himself. Does he believe in his own theories, or not? Are his pretensions sincere, or are they merely a means of raising the wind rather than the devil? Is he simply a mystic such as the world has often seen, who, having missed the truth of God in its purity, is led by the dictates of a distorted imagination

to wander helplessly among the false gleams and fantastic shadows which bewilder the souls on whom the true light has not shone ; or is he one of those darker spirits who deliberately turn from the truth because they will not obey it, and seek to prove that evil is the master of the universe, because it is their own ?

There is but one sentence in the book which would lead us to this last conclusion—a sentence referring to a comparison between the powers of good and evil, which we will not transcribe, lest it should suggest a blasphemous thought to the minds of our readers ; but the general impression conveyed by these volumes is, that the author, starting without any sound foundation of religious truth, has succeeded in persuading himself that his fantastic philosophy is the true solution of the problem of the universe, while he retains at the same time an undercurrent of doubt in his own mind as to whether his imagination is not leading him astray—a doubt in which he must allow us to share to an unlimited extent.

F. M. F. S.

In the Blooming.

BY MRS. J. H. RIDDELL, AUTHOR OF "GEORGE GRITH," &c.

WERE there any likelihood of obtaining satisfactory information on the subject, it would be interesting to inquire for how many generations a family, originally of Scottish extraction, may reside south of the border without becoming English.

Centuries after the original settler has left his native hills, in order to plant vines and mulberry-trees in a more congenial soil, his great, great-great great grandchildren still speak of themselves as Scotch—of Scotland as the fatherland.

Long after the place where once their name was familiar, knows that name no more; when the very memory of it is wiped clean out, like that of a man dead and forgotten; when the family estate has passed into the hands of strangers, who have changed the designation of that also; when moss and lichens have grown over the old tombstones, and not even in ancient graveyards is any memorial of the once powerful race to be discovered,—even then the Southern branch of the formerly goodly tree, unconscious of time's ravages, will describe itself as Scotch—of that ilk, ay, and what is more, remain actually Scotch, in feature, figure, character, pride, shyness, and nationality.

The members of no other nation, unless, indeed, it may be the Jewish, present us with this idiosyncrasy. The children of foreigners settled in England, are English to all intents and purposes. After an Irishman has, of his own free will, remained on this side the Channel for a score of years, he also is English in everything except his accent; but not even by marriage does the Scotchman become a part or parcel of his adopted country. He mingles no more with the strange stream than one bathing can be said to do. He is in it, but not of it. He is taking good out of it, but he cannot become a portion of it. At some long distance from land, far away from shore, no doubt the rapid river becomes first tainted with salt, and finally briny as the ocean; but at what distance from Scotland does the Scotchman become English?

In the Genesis of his life it may indeed come to pass that he shall go down for corn into the land of Egypt, and that into that land he may bring his wife and children to eat the fat thereof; but in the chapters following no mention shall be found of those children becoming Egyptians.

The flesh pots, and the leeks, and the cucumbers may find favour

in their sight, but their nationality remains unchanged. Strangers in the land of their adoption, they remain Scotch to the third and fourth generation.

It is from the life of such a man, English born, and yet Scotch in grain, that I want to extract a passage; but before proceeding to do so, it is necessary to premise that Robert Douglas, he who beheld what I am about to narrate, was neither superstitious nor imaginative; on the contrary, he belonged to a much harder headed and non-impressionable sect of unbelievers than any which could be found at the present day. He was barely middle-aged; he was sound of mind and limb; he had an excellent digestion; and did not fear ghosts, for the good reason that he had no faith whatever in a future state.

The eternity of punishments was to him an utterly uninteresting inquiry, since he did not believe in eternity at all. No religious doubts embarrassed him, for a man cannot doubt who recognizes no form of religion, not even one of his own making.

Morally he was not a bad man, for virtue he considered rather a better master than vice.

He was well-educated and well-read; intellectually he was merely one of the many suckers sent out by that upas-tree—the French Revolution, from the deadly influence of which hundreds of thousands are still suffering.

The idea of an overruling Providence it is, perhaps, needless to remark, he treated as a mere monkish superstition. Religion altogether he considered a mere play, got up to fill the pockets of those clever actors—the parsons. He had been to church twice in his life, he was wont to remark: once against his will, once with it; the first time when he was baptized, the second when he was married. Of course, his wife went; and, of course, she took the children. He did not interfere with such purely feminine crotchets; indeed, for women he considered the religious delusion a good one, so long as priestly influence were not permitted to gain an undue ascendancy over them; but as for believing himself, bah! if there were any power strong enough to control the actions of men, would his extravagant progenitors have been permitted to mortgage and sell the rich acres surrounding Elmfield?

If he ever went in for that sort of thing, it should be for some form of worship which recognized an evil spirit as the controller of men's destinies.

Supposing any one made mention of that other world, where friend shall meet friend, and the tears be wiped from off all faces, he would answer he being modest asked for nothing more than happiness and a few thousands a year in this. Whilst, in respect of those truths which have comforted men and women for eighteen hundred years, he uttered gibes and profane jests which need not be repeated here—jest

that had crossed the Channel and grown coarser and wickeder in transit; gibes that sounded strange spoken in a nominally Christian land by English lips.

Even before his children he could not refrain from ridiculing those things which most of us hold sacred; and it was no uncommon event at Elmfield to hear little creatures, who could scarcely speak plain, repeating his opinions, to the horror of pious mother and old-fashioned nurse.

Then would the mother remonstrate, and the father promise caution before the young folks; but reticence in expressing his convictions, or rather want of them, was so small a portion of the character of Robert Douglas, that the young folks, spite of feminine instructions and prayers, bade fair to grow up as godless, more head-strong, and perhaps less virtuous than Mr. Douglas, who, although he called himself a Scotchman, had never been north of the border, and who could not claim direct relationship to man, woman, or child dwelling on Scottish ground.

The Douglasses—his branch of them—had been settled in England for a couple of centuries. The first of the name who came south married a Lincolnshire lady, co-heiress with Constance, her sister, of such wealth that it was stated the sisters divided between them not merely manors and demesnes, farms, and rights of wood, and rights of water, but also the contents of a chest filled so full of broad gold pieces that, wearying at length of counting their riches, they apportioned each her share by measure, as a horse receives his oats.

Even in Robert Douglas' time the ancient chest, elaborately carved, bound with brass bands, profusely ornamented, and furnished with handles, wrought and chased with care, remained conspicuous amongst the family heirlooms; but there was no gold in it when he came to his estate.

The gold was gone, like the manors and the demesnes, like the farms and rights of wood and rights of water, and nothing now remained in the hands of the last descendant of the original Scotchman save Elmfield, a little property, which he farmed, and loved and lived upon.

To this place, according to the present legend, the original rooks had followed the family when the demesnes and manors passed into the hands of stock-jobbers and Levant merchants; and in the trees round and about Robert Douglas' home they kept up such a cawing and chattering as might have put to shame the quiet gossip and scandal-mongering of all the village ladies.

It was a pretty home if not a stately—a home well sheltered from the east winds, and open towards the south. There were pleasant living rooms on the lower floors, and sunny bed-chambers commanding views of the purely rural landscape that stretched away in the distance.

A little to the right, half a mile or so off, rose the tower of Deepley church. Between the church and Elmfield intervened a slight hill, so that in the distance the tower seemed like the head of a round-shouldered, short-necked man.

But it was a picturesque object for all that, even seen from a distance; and close at hand, no more graceful sight could have been desired than the old, old building with its grey ivy-covered tower, its red-tiled roof, its lych gate, and its soft green graveyard, where were swelling mounds and a few grey headstones, and a couple of more pretentious-looking monuments, one of which covered the family burying-place of Douglas of Elmfield.

A footpath led from the east side of the graveyard into the avenue of Robert Douglas' home—a grand avenue, bordered by old elm-trees planted in rows, four and five deep.

According to modern ideas the house was not in keeping with the glory of this avenue; but it was large enough, and grand enough for Robert Douglas, who found some difficulty in maintaining his family and a very small establishment.

He had to be his own bailiff and his own steward; he had to attend markets and oversee his labourers; but he was a happy man, as happiness goes, and in the main contented.

He had never met with a serious check in his life; he had married the woman he loved, he had children whom he idolized, he had a home where the noise of strife was never heard, and he had never yet been unable to pay his just debts. Economy was required certainly to meet the school bills of his elder boys, and to put by something towards sending them to college after a time; but still they were all with him, and they were all strong and healthy, and the evil days seemed far off when the world, its hopes, its pleasures, its contests, can no more interest or excite a man; when, amid the storms and tempests of earthly sorrows, he requires some prop beside him on which he can lay his hand and stand secure till the trouble be overpast, and the anguish and the pain a memory.

He had five children in all, one girl and four boys. Of the latter three were weekly boarders at a school in the nearest town, but the youngest lad—a bold, daring imp—remained at home, learning lessons under his mother's auspices, together with Eveline, the last of the flock, and the flower of it; dark-eyed, dark-haired, merry laughing Eveline, who spent the whole day long roaming about Elmfield with her brother Gordon, the veriest "limb"—so all the servants declared—that had ever been seen in that part of the country.

But bad or good, Gordon was the father's favourite out of all his children, and next to him Eveline; indeed, the two were such inseparable companions that he could not think of the one without thinking also of the other; and there never arose before the father's memory a

vision of a sturdy young vagrant with blue eyes and fair curling hair and rosy cheeks, and loud, eager voice, wearing his petticoats defiantly and under grievous protest as articles of attire only "fit for women," and unsuitable "for a man," but there came up also Eveline, either walking hand in hand with Gordon, or following that autocrat at the utmost of her speed. They were twins—the girl being youngest by about a quarter of an hour—and since their birth they had never been separated.

How they would endure separation was the question Mr. Douglas was considering one fine spring evening as he came up the elm avenue in the "gloaming."

Master Gordon, he saw, was getting beyond the control of every one in the establishment, and he was far too much of a Scotchman, even in his love, to endure the idea of any child ruling an entire household. To school the young gentleman must go, in order to find his level, to be buffeted and contradicted, to be saved from the dominion of self to fall asleep with his knuckles in his eyes crying for the old free life, and the companionship of his faithful slave Eveline. Robert Douglas had made up his mind to adopt this course, and he was thinking the matter out, walking leisurely up the avenue while the twilight deepened, and the fresh green leaves rustled in the evening breeze.

All at once the sound of a horse galloping made him pause and look behind, and there, tearing along as hard as a stiff little pony could carry him, came Master Gordon, his cap off, his short skirts fluttering about with the rapid motion, his socks hanging over the tops of his little boots, and his bare white legs shining against the horse's skin. He had neither saddle nor bridle; he was riding the creature bare-backed and with only a halter, and the creature had run away.

Before Mr. Douglas had quite realised this fact, pony and rider were far ahead of him, and with an exclamation of terror the father started in pursuit.

"If he can but stick on!" thought Mr. Douglas; but even as the thought passed through his mind he beheld the pony swerve suddenly to one side, and the boy thrown. Then the animal, never slackening its speed, galloped on, while Robert Douglas, sick with terror, ran as he had never run before, to see if his son were killed.

When he reached the spot, however, Gordon was not there. Disbelieving the evidence of his own eyes, he searched about for the child, but the bird had flown. Relieved of his pressing anxiety, the father vowed he would punish the young rascal, and teach him not to get on horseback without leave again.

"And a strange pony, too," considered the indignant parent; for he had noticed that the animal Gordon bestrode was not one belonging

to Elmfield. Wondering who the owner of the pony could be, he walked on more leisurely till he came to the point where, as I said before, the path leading from Deepley church joined Elmfield avenue. It was dark under the trees, but looking beyond the little white gate into the open country beyond, he beheld Eveline and Gordon running towards Deepley as fast as their legs could take them.

They were both bareheaded: Gordon was a trifle in advance, but by the light of the young moon which just then rose above the elm-trees, Mr. Douglas could see that the boy's hand was held back as if for his sister to grasp.

They neither of them ever turned their faces towards him, but ran on over the hill and down into the hollow, he following, till they reached Deepley churchyard; there he lost sight of them.

He shouted till he was hoarse, bidding them come to him and he would not be angry. He prayed them not to make him so unhappy, but there returned no answer through the night to his entreaties: there was only a silence profound and cruel as the grave.

Behind the headstones he searched for them; he looked to see if they were hidden in the shadow of the buttresses. He struck the clinging ivy to ascertain if they were crouching between it, and the wall. He left the churchyard and wandered away over the village green looking for the truants; but at length he turned his steps homewards, and entered the room where Mrs. Douglas, laying down her needlework, greeted him with—

"You are late, Robert! How tired you look, love!"

"Where are the children?" he asked, in a tone so harsh that it astonished her.

"The children!" she repeated; "in bed and asleep, of course. I have just come down from them."

"How long have they been in?"

"In? they have never been out; they have been with me ever since tea until they went to bed."

"You are mistaken, Agnes," was the reply. "I saw them on the hill not half an hour ago."

"You did not see them, I am certain!" she answered. "Martha went over to her father's this evening; so I undressed them myself, put them to bed, stayed with them till they were asleep, and have only been downstairs a few minutes, for Gordon was more than usually troublesome and wakeful, and I had to tell him stories to get him to lie quiet."

"I will go up to them," Mr. Douglas remarked. "It is not that I doubt your word," he added, "only I think you are mistaken as to time since you left them. I could not be deceived, and indeed I was wondering how you could think of letting them be out so late; but if Martha be not in the nursery, that accounts for it."

They went up the old oaken staircase together, and entered the children's room. There the pair lay fast asleep—Gordon with all the bed-clothes kicked off on to the floor, Eveline clasping her doll with a desperate affection.

"Show me their shoes," Mr. Douglas whispered; he knew if they had been out the soles would be wet and soaking from the damp in the graveyard.

Without a word his wife handed the little boots to him: they were dry and unsoiled.

For a second or two Mr. Douglas turned the boots over and over, thoughtfully; then feeling suddenly faint and sick, he sat down, and swooned dead away.

With some difficulty he was recovered from this faint, and assisted to his own apartment. Mrs. Douglas wanted much to send for a doctor, thinking her husband was about to have a serious illness; but he forbade her doing so, and the next morning rose and went about his business as usual.

But all the time he was considering how he should best preserve his children from the threatened danger. He could not disbelieve the evidence of his own senses. Every story, handed down from generation to generation, concerning second sight recurred to his memory now. Had it been possible for him to conquer what he called his superstitious fears, he would have done battle gallantly; but the whole vision had been too clear and consecutive to leave a shadow of doubt as to its real import.

For the first time there came a doubt into his mind as to whether all the evidence concerning another world were utterly false—as to whether there might not be something after all in the parson's jargon and the old women's fables—something beyond this life which, while he was in this life, he could neither touch nor see, nor other than dimly comprehend, but which might be true nevertheless,—something more in death than mere unconsciousness, than dust to dust and ashes to ashes,—something, the bare idea of which filled him at once with a sickening dread and a terrible despair.

It was all as though a prophet had suddenly sprung up in his path, and said to him as Nathan said to the Jewish king in the very noon of his life—in the very meridian of his happiness: "The child that is born unto thee, shall surely die."

Thus, at all events, he interpreted his vision: it meant death to one or both of the little ones to whom his soul clung so tenderly!

Robert Douglas, though he would have disbelieved the story had any one else repeated it to him, did not discredit that which he had beheld with his own eyes. He accepted the warning as such; but he was not a man to follow the example of David—to weep, to fast, to pray. Rather he girt himself up to wrestle against

his enemy—to strive to arrest by human means the impending danger.

That very day a way seemed opened for his desires, for there came a letter from Mrs. Douglas' sister, a widow who had lately taken a place in Hampshire, entreating that lady to come and pay her a long visit, and bring with her "the children;" also Mr. Douglas, if he could be persuaded to leave his farm at that season of the year.

On the acceptance of this invitation, Mr. Douglas insisted as he had never insisted on anything before during the whole of his married life. He gave his wife no peace till her letter was written, her modest preparations made, and herself and the children *en route* for the Manor House.

When they were fairly away from Elmfield, a load seemed lifted off his breast, and his elder boys, when they came home on the Saturday following, thought they had never seen their father so cheerful and good-natured. He was not so strict with them as usual; they all took a long walk together on the Saturday afternoon, and Sunday evening as well. He drove them back to school himself, and tipped them all, bidding each be a good lad for his mother's sake, and so the days and the weeks went by, and it was summer; and Mrs. Douglas wrote to say she felt longing to be at home again, and begged her husband to come and fetch her.

But with this letter came another from Mrs. Stracey, entreating that her sister should prolong her visit until the end of the summer holidays, and that Mr. Douglas and the three schoolboys should come into Hampshire, where they could all make pleasant excursions, and have picnic parties together.

Gladly enough Mr. Douglas agreed to this proposition, so far at least as his wife and children were concerned. For himself he promised to spend a week at the Manor House, and during that week he resolved to open his mind to his sister-in-law.

But before the summer holidays arrived, the post one morning brought a few lines from Mrs. Stracey, begging Mr. Douglas to proceed to Hampshire without delay. "Gordon is ill," she said, "and we want you to see him, at least Agnes does."

Then like a man going forth to execution, Robert Douglas rose up to obey this summons.

There was a fierce battle raging in his heart, a wild desperation at the thought of his own impotence. He was strong, he was well, he had a stubborn will; he was a giant in determination, and yet, behold! he felt like one bound and fettered and constrained by a mightier than himself!

In his infidelity, in his gibing, in his scoffing, in his profanity, he had been a very Samson of strength; but when the hand of the God

he had mocked descended upon him, he was feeble and powerless as a young child.

Powerless to avert misfortune, but not insensible to it; in his agony, in his despair, he blasphemed in his soul, and called the God he had denied cruel, unjust.

His lips framed no petition, but he travelled on silent and sullen, till at length on the evening of the day after he had received the message, the coach dropped him at the entrance to Mrs. Stracey's house.

He left his portmanteau with the lodge-keeper, and walked on towards the house.

He had not been able to ask whether his boy were living or dead. He had tried to do so, but his tongue refused to utter the words. In the gloaming he walked on—on—till suddenly looking up he saw the avenue he was traversing, and that he had left behind at Elmfield, were almost identical. There were rows on rows of giant trees, there was the same glimpse of park and field to be obtained between the trunks, there was the same soft turf bordering the edges, and the same turn branching off towards the house.

Then he knew he had, in the might of his own wisdom, sent his son to his death, and a clammy perspiration and a deadly sickness came over him as the conviction fled home that he should never more see Gordon alive—that the boy had gone where not even the voice of his love could reach him.

When he arrived at the house, Mrs. Stracey met and drew him into a room on the ground-floor. She did not need to tell him; he looked in her face,—that was enough.

No sturdy, rebellious, daring, unmanageable little vagrant should now come to him through the long grass, tramping across the springing corn in the future—that future which seemed to him at the moment to present such a desert waste of years. The little feet were still, and the golden head laid low. It had all come about as in his vision—no, not yet quite all!

Back, heavily and wearily, Robert Douglas journeyed to Elmfield, bearing his dead with him.

What he felt, what he suffered, no one save God in Heaven knew. By no audible word, by no visible sign that he uttered would it have been possible to tell how his boy's death had stricken him. He stood beside his grave and listened, as in a bewildered dream, to the words of the burial-service; but though he beheld the gaping earth and the white coffin—though he saw the faces of his friends and neighbours turned compassionately towards him—these things, which were the realities of his life, did not seem to him one half so vivid as the memory of two little children running fast—oh! so fast—faster than he could follow in the direction of Deepley churchyard, where he lost them.

Them!—ah! yes, for it came to that. Before the autumn fruits were ripe, Eveline sickened and died. She fretted and pined for her companion from the day when he went away from her. And when at last it was announced to Robert Douglas that Evy was very ill, and the doctor had better be sent for, he hurried out of the house and wrestled with his agony all alone.

The years came and the years went, and after the passage of many summers and of many winters, there arrived at Elmfield an old friend whom Robert Douglas had not seen during a quarter of a century.

At the end of a few days, this man chanced to remark one evening to Mr. Douglas as they walked together through the fields, how much his opinions seemed modified, or at least how reticent he appeared to be of expressing them.

In answer was repeated the story I have tried to tell.

“We do not speak much of that which lies nearest our hearts,” Robert Douglas replied, baring his head instinctively as he added, “I never talk of my dead children; and I have never said before to living being that, like Jacob, I believe I have seen God face to face!

Squire Coby's Will.

A GHOST STORY.

MANY persons accustomed to travel the old York and London road, in the days of stage-coaches, will remember passing, in the afternoon, say, of an autumn day, in their journey to the capital, about three miles south of the town of Applebury, and a mile and a half before you reach the old Angel Inn, a large black-and-white house, as those old-fashioned cage-work habitations are termed, dilapidated and weather-stained, with broad lattice windows glimmering all over in the evening sun with little diamond panes, and thrown into relief by a dense background of ancient elms. A wide avenue, now overgrown like a churchyard with grass and weeds, and flanked by double rows of the same dark trees, old and gigantic, with here and there a gap in their solemn files, and sometimes a fallen tree lying across on the avenue, leads up to the hall-door.

Looking up its sombre and lifeless avenue from the top of the London coach, as I have often done, you are struck with so many signs of desertion and decay; the tufted grass sprouting in the chinks of the steps and window-stones, the smokeless chimneys over which the jackdaws are wheeling, the absence of human life and all its evidences, that you conclude at once that the place is uninhabited and abandoned to decay. The name of this ancient house is Gylingden Hall. Tall hedges and old timber quickly shroud the old place from view, and about a quarter of a mile further on you pass, embowered in melancholy trees, a small and ruinous Saxon chapel, which, time out of mind, has been the burying-place of the family of Marston, and partakes of the neglect and desolation which brood over their ancient dwelling-place.

The grand melancholy of the secluded valley of Gylingden, lonely as an enchanted forest, in which the crows returning to their roosts among the trees, and the straggling deer who peep from beneath their branches, seem to hold a wild and undisturbed dominion, heightens the forlorn aspect of Gylingden Hall.

Of late years repairs have been neglected, and here and there the roof is stripped, and "the stitch in time" has been wanting. At the side of the house exposed to the gales that sweep through the valley like a torrent through its channel, there is not a perfect window left, and the shutters but imperfectly exclude the rain. The ceilings and walls are mildewed and green with damp stains. Here and there,

where the drip falls from the ceiling, the floors are rotting. On stormy nights, as the guard described, you can hear the doors clapping in the old house, as far away as Old Gryston bridge, and the howl and sobbing of the wind through its empty galleries.

About seventy years ago died the old Squire, Toby Marston, famous in that part of the world for his hounds, his hospitality, and his vices. He had done kind things, and he had fought duels: he had given away money and he had horse-whipped people. He carried with him some blessings and a good many curses, and left behind him an amount of debts and charges upon the estates which appalled his two sons, who had no taste for business or accounts, and had never suspected, till that wicked, open-handed, and swearing old gentleman died, how very nearly he had run the estates into insolvency.

They met at Gylingden Hall. They had the will before them, and lawyers to interpret, and information without stint, as to the encumbrances with which the deceased had saddled them. The will was so framed as to set the two brothers instantly at deadly feud.

These brothers differed in some points; but in one material characteristic they resembled one another, and also their departed father. They never went into a quarrel by halves, and once in, they did not stick at trifles.

The elder, Scroope Marston, the more dangerous man of the two, had never been a favourite of the old Squire. He had no taste for the sports of the field and the pleasures of a rustic life. He was no athlete, and he certainly was not handsome. All this the Squire resented. The young man, who had no respect for him, and outgrew his fear of his violence as he came to manhood, retorted. This aversion, therefore, in the ill-conditioned old man grew into positive hatred. He used to wish that d——d pipen-squeezing, humpbacked rascal Scroope, out of the way of better men—meaning his younger son Charles; and in his cups would talk in a way which even the old and young fellows who followed his hounds, and drank his port, and could stand a reasonable amount of brutality, did not like.

Scroope Marston was slightly deformed, and he had the lean sallow face, piercing black eyes, and black lank hair, which sometimes accompany deformity.

“I’m no feyther o’ that hog-backed creature. I’m no sire of hisn, d——n him! I’d as soon call that tongs son o’ mine.” The old man used to bawl, in allusion to his son’s long, lank limbs: “Charlie’s a man, but that’s a jack-an-ape. He has no good-nature; there’s nothing handy, nor manly, nor no one turn of a Marston in him.”

And when he was pretty drunk, the old Squire used to swear he should never “sit at the head o’ that board; nor frighten away folk from Gylingden Hall wi’ his d——d hatchet-face—the black loon!”

“ Handsome Charlie was the man for his money. He knew what a horse was, and could sit to his bottle ; and the lasses were all clean *wad* about him. He was a Marston every inch of his six foot two.”

Handsome Charlie and he, however, had also had a row or two. The old Squire was free with his horsewhip as with his tongue, and on occasion when neither weapon was quite practicable, had been known to give a fellow “ a tap o’ his knuckles.” Handsome Charlie, however, thought there was a period at which personal chastisement should cease ; and one night, when the port was flowing, there was some allusion to Marion Hayward, the miller’s daughter, which for some reason the old gentleman did not like. Being “ in liquor,” and having clearer ideas about pugilism than self-government, he struck out, to the surprise of all present, at Handsome Charlie. The youth threw back his head scientifically, and nothing followed but the crash of a decanter on the floor. But the old Squire’s blood was up, and he bounced from his chair. Up jumped Handsome Charlie, resolved to stand no nonsense. Drunken Squire Lilbourne, intending to mediate, fell flat on the floor, and cut his ear among the glasses. Handsome Charlie caught the thump which the old Squire discharged at him upon his open hand, and catching him by the cravat, swung him with his back to the wall. They said the old man never looked so purple, nor his eyes so goggle before ; and then Handsome Charlie pinioned him tight to the wall by both arms.

“ Well, I say—come, don’t you talk no more nonsense o’ that sort, and I won’t lick you,” croaked the old Squire. “ You stopped that un clever, you did. Didn’t he ? Come, Charlie, man, gie’ us your hand, I say, and sit down again, lad.” And so the battle ended ; and I believe it was the last time the Squire raised his hand to Handsome Charlie.

But those days were over. Old Toby Marston lay cold and quiet enough now, under the drip of the mighty ash-tree within the Saxon ruin where so many of the old Marston race returned to dust, and were forgotten. The weather-stained top-boots and leather-breeches, the three cocked hat to which old gentlemen of that day still clung, and the well-known red waistcoat that reached below his hips, and the fierce pug face of the old Squire, were now but a picture of memory. And the brothers between whom he had planted an irreconcilable quarrel, were now in their new mourning suits, with the gloss still on, debating furiously across the table in the great oak parlour, which had so often resounded to the banter and coarse songs, the oaths and laughter of the congenial neighbours whom the old Squire of Gylingden Hall loved to assemble there.

These young gentlemen, who had grown up in Gylingden Hall, were not accustomed to bridle their tongues, nor, if need be, to hesitate about a blow. Neither had been at the old man’s funeral.

His death had been sudden. Having been helped to his bed in that hilarious and quarrelsome state which was induced by port and punch, he was found dead in the morning,—his head hanging over the side of the bed, and his face very black and swollen.

Now the Squire's will despoiled his eldest son of Gylingden, which had descended to the heir time out of mind. Scroope Marston was furious. His deep stern voice was heard inveighing against his dead father and living brother, and the heavy thumps on the table with which he enforced his stormy reclamations resounded through the large chamber. Then broke in Charles's rougher voice, and then came a quick alternation of short sentences, and then both voices together in growing loudness and anger, and at last, swelling the tumult, the expostulations of pacific and frightened lawyers, and at last a sudden break up of the conference. Scroope broke out of the room, his pale furious face showing whiter against his long black hair, his dark fierce eyes blazing, his hands clenched, and looking more ungainly and deformed than ever in the convulsions of his fury.

Very violent words must have passed between them; for Charlie, though he was the winning man, was almost as angry as Scroope. The elder brother was for holding possession of the house, and putting his rival to legal process to oust him. But his legal advisers were clearly against it. So, with a heart boiling over with gall, up he went to London, and found the legal firm who had managed his father's business fair and communicative enough. They looked into the settlements, and found that Gylingden was excepted. It was very odd, but so it was, specially excepted; so that the right of the old Squire to deal with it by his will could not be questioned.

Notwithstanding all this, Scroope, breathing vengeance and aggression, and quite willing to wreck himself provided he could run his brother down, assailed Handsome Charlie, and battered old Squire Toby's will in the Prerogative Court and also at common law, and the feud between the brothers was knit, and every month their exasperation was heightened.

Scroope was beaten, and defeat did not soften him. Charles might have forgiven hard words; but he had been himself worsted during the long campaign in some of those skirmishes, special motions, and so forth, that constitute the episodes of a legal epic like that in which the Marston brothers figured as opposing combatants; and the blight of law-costs had touched him, too, with the usual effect upon the temper of a man of embarrassed means.

Years flew, and brought no healing on their wings. On the contrary, the deep corrosion of this hatred bit deeper by time. Neither brother married. But an accident of a different kind befell the younger, Charles Marston, which abridged his enjoyments very materially.

This was a bad fall from his hunter. There were severe fractures,

and there was concussion of the brain. For some time it was thought that he could not recover. He disappointed these evil auguries, however. He did recover, but changed in two essential particulars. He had received an injury in his hip, which doomed him never more to sit in saddle. And the rollicking animal spirits which hitherto had never failed him, had now taken flight for ever.

He had been for five days in a state of coma—absolute insensibility—and when he recovered consciousness he was haunted by an indescribable anxiety.

Tom Cooper, who had been butler in the palmy days of Gylingden Hall, under old Squire Toby, still maintained his post with old-fashioned fidelity, in these days of faded splendour and frugal house-keeping. Twenty years had passed since the death of his old master. He had grown lean, and stooped, and his face, dark with the peculiar brown of age, furrowed and gnarled, and his temper, except with his master, had waxed surly.

His master had visited Bath and Buxton, and came back, as he went, lame, and halting gloomily about with the aid of a stick. When the hunter was sold, the last tradition of the old life at Gylingden disappeared. The young Squire, as he was still called, excluded by his mischance from the hunting-field, dropped into a solitary way of life, and halted slowly and solitarily about the old place, seldom raising his eyes, and with an appearance of indescribable gloom.

Old Cooper could talk freely on occasion with his master; and one day he said, as he handed him his hat and stick in the hall:

“You should rouse yourself up a bit, Master Charles!”

“It’s past rousing with me, old Cooper.”

“It’s just this, I’m thinking: there’s something on your mind, and you won’t tell no one. There’s no good keeping it on your stomach. You’ll be a deal lighter if you tell it. Come, now, what is it, Master Charlie?”

The Squire looked with his round grey eyes straight into Cooper’s eyes. He felt that there was a sort of spell broken. It was like the old rule of the ghost who can’t speak till it is spoken to. He looked earnestly into old Cooper’s face for some seconds, and sighed deeply.

“It ain’t the first good guess you’ve made in your day, old Cooper, and I’m glad you’ve spoke. It’s bin on my mind, sure enough, ever since I had that fall. Come in here after me, and shut the door.”

The Squire pushed open the door of the oak parlour, and looked round on the pictures abstractedly. He had not been there for some time, and, seating himself on the table, he looked again for a while in Cooper’s face before he spoke.

“It’s not a great deal, Cooper, but it troubles me, and I would not tell it to the parson nor the doctor; for, God knows, what they’d say,

though there's nothing to signify in it. But you were always true to the family, and I don't mind if I tell you."

"'Tis as safe with Cooper, Master Charles, as if 'twas locked in a chest, and sunk in a well."

"It's only this" said Charles Marston, looking down on the end of his stick, with which he was tracing lines and circles, "all the time I was lying like dead, as you thought, after that fall, I was with the old master." He raised his eyes to Cooper's again as he spoke, and with an awful oath he repeated—"I was with him, Cooper!"

"He was a good man, sir, in his way," repeated old Cooper, returning his gaze with awe. "He was a good master to me, and a good father to you, and I hope he's happy. May God rest him!"

"Well," said Squire Charles, "it's only this: the whole of that time I was with him, or he was with me—I don't know which. The upshot is, we were together, and I thought I'd never get out of his hands again, and all the time he was bullying me about some one thing; and if it was to save my life, Tom Cooper, by —— from the time I waked I never could call to mind what it was; and I think I'd give that hand to know; and if you can think of anything it might be—for God's sake! don't be afraid, Tom Cooper, but speak it out, for he threatened me hard, and it was surely him."

Here ensued a silence.

"And what did you think it might be yourself, Master Charles?" said Cooper.

"I han't thought of aught that's likely. I'll never hit on't—*never*. I thought it might happen he knew something about that d—— hump-backed villain, Scroope, that swore before Lawyer Gingham I made away with a paper of settlements—me and father; and, as I hope to be saved, Tom Cooper, there never was a bigger lie! I'd a had the law of him for them identical words, and cast him for more than he's worth; only Lawyer Gingham never goes into nothing for me since money grew scarce in Gylingden; and I can't change my lawyer, I owe him such a hatful of money. But he did, he swore he'd hang me yet for it. He said it in them identical words—he'd never rest till he *hanged* me for it, and I think it was, like enough, something about *that*, the old master was troubled; but it's enough to drive a man mad. I *can't* bring it to mind—I can't remember a word he said, only he threatened awful, and looked—Lord a mercy on us!—frightful bad."

"There's no need he should. May the Lord a-mercy on him!" said the old butler.

"No, of course; and you're not to tell a soul, Cooper—not a living soul, mind, that I said he looked bad, nor nothing about it."

"God forbid!" said old Cooper, shaking his head. "But I was thinking, sir, it might ha' been about the slight that's bin so long put

on him by having no stone over him, and never a scratch o' a chisel to say who he is."

"Ay! Well, I didn't think o' that. Put on your hat, old Cooper, and come down wi' me; for I'll look after that, at any rate."

There is a bye-path leading by a turnstile to the park, and thence to the picturesque old burying-place, which lies in a nook by the roadside, embowered in ancient trees. It was a fine autumnal sunset, and melancholy lights and long shadows spread their peculiar effects over the landscape as "Handsome Charlie" and the old butler made their way slowly toward the place where Handsome Charlie was himself to lie at last.

"Which of the dogs made that howling all last night?" asked the Squire, when they had got on a little way.

"'Twas a strange dog, Master Charles, in front of the house; ours was all in the yard—a white dog wi' a black head, he looked to be, and he was smelling round them mounting-steps the old master, God be wi' him! set up, the time his knee was bad. When the tyke got up a'top of them, howlin' up at the windows, I'd a liked to shy something at him."

"Hullo! Is that like him?" said the Squire, stopping short, and pointing with his stick at a dirty-white dog, with a large black head, which was scampering round them in a wide circle, half crouching with that air of uncertainty and deprecation which dogs so well know how to assume.

He whistled the dog up. He was a large, half-starved bull-dog.

"That fellow has made a long journey—thin as a whipping-post, and stained all over, and his claws worn to the stumps," said the Squire, musingly. "He isn't a bad dog, Cooper. My poor father liked a good bull-dog, and knew a cur from a good 'un."

The dog was looking up into the Squire's face with the peculiar grim visage of his kind, and the Squire was thinking irreverently how strong a likeness it presented to the character of his father's fierce pug features when he was clutching his horsewhip and swearing at a keeper.

"If I did right I'd shoot him. He'll worry the cattle, and kill our dogs," said the Squire. "Hey, Cooper? I'll tell the keeper to look after him. That fellow could pull down a sheep, and he shan't live on my mutton."

But the dog was not to be shaken off. He looked wistfully after the Squire, and after they had got a little way on, he followed timidly.

It was vain trying to drive him off. The dog ran round them in wide circles, like the infernal dog in "Faust;" only he left no track of thin flame behind him. These manœuvres were executed with a sort of beseeching air, which flattered and touched the object of this odd

preference. So he called him up again, patted him, and then and there in a manner adopted him.

The dog now followed their steps dutifully, as if he had belonged to Handsome Charlie all his days. Cooper unlocked the little iron door, and the dog walked in close behind their heels, and followed them as they visited the roofless chapel.

The Marstons were lying under the floor of this little building in rows. There is not a vault. Each has his distinct grave enclosed in a lining of masonry. Each is surmounted by a stone kist, on the upper flag of which is inscribed his epitaph, except that of poor old Squire Toby. Over him was nothing but the grass and the line of masonry which indicates the site of the kist, whenever his family should afford him one like the rest.

"Well, it does look shabby. It's the elder brother's business; but if he won't, I'll see to it myself, and I'll take care, old boy, to cut sharp and deep in it, that the elder son having refused to lend a hand the stone was put there by the younger."

They strolled round this little burial-ground. The sun was now below the horizon, and the red metallic glow from the clouds, still illuminated by the departed sun, mingled luridly with the twilight. When Charlie peeped again into the little chapel, he saw the ugly dog stretched upon Squire Toby's grave, looking at least twice his natural length, and performing such antics as made the young Squire stare. If you have ever seen a cat stretched on the floor, with a bunch of Valerian, straining, writhing, rubbing its jaws in long-drawn caresses, and in the absorption of a sensual ecstasy, you have seen a phenomenon resembling that which Handsome Charlie witnessed on looking in.

The head of the brute looked so huge, its body so long and thin, and its joints so ungainly and dislocated, that the Squire, with old Cooper beside him, looked on with a feeling of disgust and astonishment, which, in a moment or two more, brought the Squire's stick down upon him with a couple of heavy thumps. The beast awakened from his ecstasy, sprang to the head of the grave, and there on a sudden, thick and bandy as before, confronted the Squire, who stood at its foot, with a terrible grin, and eyes that glared with the peculiar green of canine fury.

The next moment the dog was crouching abjectly at the Squire's feet.

"Well, he's a rum 'un!" said old Cooper, looking hard at him.

"I like him," said the Squire.

"I don't," said Cooper.

"But he shan't come in here again," said the Squire.

"I shouldn't wonder if he was a witch," said old Cooper, who remembered more tales of witchcraft than are now current in that part of the world.

"He's a good dog," said the Squire, dreamily. "I remember the time I'd a given a handful for him—but I'll never be good for nothing again. Come along."

And he stooped down and patted him. So up jumped the dog and looked up in his face, as if watching for some sign, ever so slight, which he might obey.

Cooper did not like a bone in that dog's skin. He could not imagine what his master saw to admire in him. He kept him all night in the gun-room, and the dog accompanied him in his halting rambles about the place. The fonder his master grew of him, the less did Cooper and the other servants like him.

"He hasn't a point of a good dog about him," Cooper would growl. "I think Master Charlie be blind. And old Captain (an old red parrot who sat chained to a perch in the oak parlour, and conversed with himself, and nibbled at his claws and bit his perch all day),—old Captain, the only living thing, except one or two of us, and the Squire himself, that remembers the old master, the minute he saw the dog, screeched as if he was struck, shakin' his feathers out quite wild, and drops down, poor old soul, a-hangin' by his foot, in a fit."

But there is no accounting for fancies, and the Squire was one of those dogged persons who persist more obstinately in their whims the more they are opposed. But Charles Marston's health suffered by his lameness. The transition from habitual and violent exercise to such a life as his privation now consigned him to, was never made without a risk to health; and a host of dyspeptic annoyances, the existence of which he had never dreamed of before, now beset him in sad earnest. Among these was the now not unfrequent troubling of his sleep with dreams and nightmares. In these his canine favourite invariably had a part and was generally a central, and sometimes a solitary figure. In these visions the dog seemed to stretch himself up the side of the Squire's bed, and in dilated proportions to sit at his feet, with a horrible likeness to the pug features of old Squire Toby, with his tricks of wagging his head and throwing up his chin; and then he would talk to him about Scroope, and tell him "all wasn't straight," and that he "must make it up wi' Scroope," that he, the old Squire, had "served him an ill turn," that "time was nigh up," and that "fair was fair," and he was "troubled where he was, about Scroope."

Then in his dream this semi-human brute would approach his face to his, crawling and crouching up his body, heavy as lead, till the face of the beast was laid on his, with the same odious caresses and stretchings and writhings which he had seen over the old Squire's grave. Then Charlie would wake up with a gasp and a howl, and start upright in the bed, bathed in a cold moisture, and fancy he saw something white sliding off the foot of the bed. Sometimes he thought it might be the curtain with white lining that slipped down, or the coverlet dis-

turbed by his uneasy turnings ; but he always fancied, at such moments, that he saw something white sliding hastily off the bed ; and always when he had been visited by such dreams the dog next morning was more than usually caressing and servile, as if to obliterate, by a more than ordinary welcome, the sentiment of disgust which the horror of the night had left behind it.

The doctor half-satisfied the Squire that there was nothing in these dreams, which, in one shape or another, invariably attended forms of indigestion such as he was suffering from.

For a while, as if to corroborate this theory, the dog ceased altogether to figure in them. But at last there came a vision in which, more unpleasantly than before, he did resume his old place.

In his nightmare the room seemed all but dark ; he heard what he knew to be the dog walking from the door round his bed slowly, to the side from which he always had come upon it. A portion of the room was uncarpeted, and he said he distinctly heard the peculiar tread of a dog, in which the faint clatter of the claws is audible. It was a light stealthy step, but at every tread the whole room shook heavily ; he felt something place itself at the foot of his bed, and saw a pair of green eyes staring at him in the dark, from which he could not remove his own. Then he heard, as he thought, the old Squire Toby say—"The eleventh hour be passed, Charlie, and ye've done nothing—you and I 'a done Scroope a wrong !" and then came a good deal more, and then—"The time's nigh up, it's going to strike." And with a long low growl, the thing began to creep up upon his feet ; the growl continued, and he saw the reflection of the up-turned green eyes upon the bed-clothes, as it began slowly to stretch itself up his body toward his face. With a loud scream, he waked. The light, which of late the Squire was accustomed to have in his bed-room, had accidentally gone out. He was afraid to get up, or even to look about the room for some time ; so sure did he feel of seeing the green eyes in the dark fixed on him from some corner. He had hardly recovered from the first agony which night-mare leaves behind it, and was beginning to collect his thoughts, when he heard the clock strike twelve. And he bethought him of the words "the eleventh hour be passed—time's nigh up—it's going to strike !" and he almost feared that he would hear the voice re-opening the subject.

Next morning the Squire came down looking ill.

"Do you know a room, old Cooper," said he, "they used to call King Herod's Chamber ?"

"Ay, sir ; the story of King Herod was on the walls o't when I was a boy."

"There's a closet off it—is there ?"

"I can't be sure o' that ; but 't isn't worth your looking at, now ; the hangings was rotten, and took off the walls, before you was born ;

and there's nou't there but some old broken things and lumber. I seed them put there myself by poor Twinks; he was blind of an eye, and footman afterwards. You'll remember Twinks? He died here, about the time o' the great snow. There was a deal o' work to bury him, poor fellow!"

"Get the key, old Cooper; I'll look at the room," said the Squire.

"And what the devil can you want to look at it for?" said Cooper, with the old-world privilege of a rustic butler.

"And what the devil's that to you? But I don't mind if I tell you. I don't want that dog in the gun-room, and I'll put him somewhere else; and I don't care if I put him there."

"A bull-dog in a bed-room! Oons, sir! the folks 'ill say you're clean mad!"

"Well, let them; get you the key, and let us look at the room."

"You'd shoot him if you did right, Master Charlie. You never heard what a noise he kept up all last night in the gun-room, walking to and fro growling like a tiger in a show; and, say what you like, the dog's not worth his feed; he hasn't a point of a dog; he's a bad dog."

"I know a dog better than you—and he's a good dog!" said the Squire, testily.

"If you was a judge of a dog you'd hang that un," said Cooper.

"I'm not a-going to hang him, so there's an end. Go you, and get the key; and don't be talking, mind, when you go down. I may change my mind."

Now this freak of visiting King Herod's room had, in truth, a totally different object from that pretended by the Squire. The voice in his nightmare had uttered a particular direction, which haunted him, and would give him no peace until he had tested it. So far from liking that dog to-day, he was beginning to regard it with a horrible suspicion; and if old Cooper had not stirred his obstinate temper by seeming to dictate, I dare say he would have got rid of that inmate effectually before evening.

Up to the third storey, long disused, he and old Cooper mounted. At the end of a dusty gallery, the room lay. The old tapestry, from which the spacious chamber had taken its name, had long given place to modern paper, and this was mildewed, and in some places hanging from the walls. A thick mantle of dust lay over the floor. Some broken chairs and boards, thick with dust, lay, along with other lumber, piled together at one end of the room.

They entered the closet, which was quite empty. The Squire looked round, and you could hardly have said whether he was relieved or disappointed.

"No furniture here," said the Squire, and looked through the dusty window. "Did you say anything to me lately—I don't

mean this morning—about this room, or the closet—or anything—I forget—”

“Lor’ bless you! Not I. I han’t been thinkin’ o’ this room this forty year.”

“Is [there any sort of old furniture called a *buffet*—do you remember?” asked the Squire.

“A buffet? why, yes—to be sure—there was a buffet, sure enough, in this closet, now you bring it to my mind,” said Cooper. “But it’s papered over.”

“And what is it?”

“A little cupboard in the wall,” answered the old man.

“Ho—I see—and there’s such a thing here, is there, under the paper? Show me whereabouts it was.”

“Well—I think it was somewhere about here,” answered he, rapping his knuckles along the wall opposite the window. “Ay, there it is,” he added, as the hollow sound of a wooden door was returned to his knock.

The Squire pulled the loose paper from the wall, and disclosed the doors of a small press, about two feet square, fixed in the wall.

“The very thing for my buckles and pistols, and the rest of my gimcracks,” said the Squire. “Come away, we’ll leave the dog where he is. Have you the key of that little press?”

No, he had not. The old master had emptied and locked it up, and desired that it should be papered over, and that was the history of it.

Down came the Squire, and took a strong turn-screw from his gun-case; and quietly he re-ascended to King Herod’s room, and, with little trouble, forced the door of the small press in the closet wall. There were in it some letters and cancelled leases, and also a parchment deed which he took to the window and read with much agitation. It was a supplemental deed executed about a fortnight after the others, and previously to his marriage, placing Gylingden under strict settlement to the elder son, in what is called “tail male.” Handsome Charlie, in his fraternal litigation, had acquired a smattering of technical knowledge, and he perfectly well knew that the effect of this would be not only to transfer the house and lands to his brother Scroope, but to leave him at the mercy of that exasperated brother, who might recover from him personally every guinea he had ever received by way of rent, from the date of his father’s death.

It was a dismal, clouded day, with something threatening in its aspect, and the darkness, where he stood, was made deeper by the top of one of the huge old trees overhanging the window.

In a state of awful confusion he attempted to think over his position. He placed the deed in his pocket, and nearly made up his mind to destroy it. A short time ago he would not have hesitated for a moment under such circumstances; but now his health and his nerves were

shattered, and he was under a supernatural alarm which the strange discovery of this deed had powerfully confirmed.

In this state of profound agitation he heard a sniffing at the closet-door, and then an impatient scratch and a long low growl. He screwed his courage up, and, not knowing what to expect, threw the door open and saw the dog, not in his dream-shape, but wriggling with joy, and crouching and fawning with eager submission; and then wandering about the closet, the brute growled awfully into the corners of it, and seemed in an unappeasable agitation.

Then the dog returned and fawned and crouched again at his feet.

After the first moment was over, the sensations of abhorrence and fear began to subside, and he almost reproached himself for requiting the affection of this poor friendless brute with the antipathy which he had really done nothing to earn.

The dog pattered after him down the stairs. Oddly enough, the sight of this animal, after the first revulsion, reassured him; it was, in his eyes, so attached, so good-natured, and palpably so mere a dog.

By the hour of evening the Squire had resolved on a middle course; he would not inform his brother of his discovery, nor yet would he destroy the deed. He would never marry. He was past that time. He would leave a letter, explaining the discovery of the deed, addressed to the only surviving trustee—who had probably forgotten everything about it—and having seen out his own tenure, he would provide that all should be set right after his death. Was not that fair? at all events it quite satisfied what he called his conscience, and he thought it a devilish good compromise for his brother; and he went out, towards sunset, to take his usual walk.

Returning in the darkening twilight, the dog, as usual attending him, began to grow frisky and wild, at first scampering round him in great circles, as before, nearly at the top of his speed, his great head between his paws as he raced. Gradually more excited grew the pace and narrower his circuit, louder and fiercer his continuous growl, and the Squire stopped and grasped his stick hard, for the lurid eyes and the grin of the brute threatened an attack. Turning round and round as the excited brute encircled him, and striking vainly at him with his stick, he grew at last so tired that he almost despaired of keeping him longer at bay; when on a sudden the dog stopped short and crawled up to his feet wriggling and crouching submissively.

Nothing could be more apologetic and abject; and when the Squire dealt him two heavy thumps with his stick, the dog whimpered only, and writhed and licked his feet. The Squire sat down on a prostrate tree; and his dumb companion, recovering his wonted spirits immediately, began to sniff and nuzzle among the roots. The Squire felt in his breast-pocket for the deed—it was safe; and again he pondered, in this loneliest of spots, on the question whether he should preserve it

for restoration after his death to his brother, or destroy it forthwith. He began rather to lean toward the latter solution, when the long low growl of the dog not far off startled him.

He was sitting in a melancholy grove of old trees, that slants gently westward. Exactly the same odd effect of light I have before described; a faint red glow reflected downward from the upper sky, after the sun had set, now gave to the growing darkness a lurid uncertainty. This grove, which lies in a gentle hollow, owing to its circumscribed horizon on all but one side, has a peculiar character of loneliness.

He got up and peeped over a sort of barrier, accidentally formed of the trunks of felled trees laid one over the other, and saw the dog straining up the other side of it, and hideously stretched out, his ugly head looking in consequence twice the natural size. His dream was coming over him again. And now between the trunks the brute's ungainly head was thrust, and the long neck came straining through, and the body, twining after it like a huge white lizard; and as it came striving and twisting through, it growled and glared as if it would devour him.

As swiftly as his lameness would allow, the Squire hurried from this solitary spot towards the house. What thoughts exactly passed through his mind as he did so, I am sure he could not have told. But when the dog came up with him it seemed appeased, and even in high good-humour, and no longer resembled the brute that haunted his dreams.

That night, near ten o'clock, the Squire, a good deal agitated, sent for the keeper, and told him that he believed the dog was mad, and that he must shoot him. He might shoot the dog in the gun-room, where he was—a grain of shot or two in the wainscot did not matter, and the dog must not have a chance of getting out.

The Squire gave the gamekeeper his double-barrelled gun, loaded with heavy shot. He did not go with him beyond the hall. He placed his hand on the keeper's arm; the keeper said his hand trembled, and that he looked "as white as curds."

"Listen a bit!" said the Squire, under his breath.

They heard the dog in a state of high excitement in the room—growling ominously, jumping on the window-stool and down again, and running round the room.

"You'll need to be sharp, mind—don't give him a chance—slip in edgeways, d'ye see? and give him both barrels!"

"Not the first mad dog I've knocked over, sir," said the man, looking very serious as he cocked the gun.

As the keeper opened the door, the dog had sprung into the empty grate. He said he "never seed sich a stark, staring devil. The beast made a twist round, as if, he thought, to jump up the chimney—

“but that wasn't to be done at no price,”—and he made a yell—not like a dog—like a man caught in a mill-crank, and before he could spring at the keeper, he fired one barrel into him. The dog leaped towards him, and rolled over, receiving the second barrel in his head, as he lay snorting at the keeper's feet!

“I never seed the like; I never heard a screech like that!” said the keeper, recoiling. “It makes a fellow feel queer.”

“Quite dead?” asked the Squire.

“Not a stir in him, sir,” said the man, pulling him along the floor by the neck.

“Throw him outside the hall-door now,” said the Squire; “and mind you pitch him outside the gate to-night—old Cooper says he's a witch,” and the pale Squire smiled, “so he shan't lie in Gylingden.”

Never was man more relieved than the Squire, and he slept better for a week after this than he had done for many weeks before.

It behoves us all to act promptly on our good resolutions. There is a determined gravitation towards evil, which, if left to itself, will bear down first intentions. If at one moment of superstitious fear, the Squire had made up his mind to a great sacrifice, and resolved in the matter of that deed so strangely recovered, to act honestly by his brother, that [resolution very soon] gave place to the compromise with fraud, which so conveniently postponed the restitution to the period when further enjoyment on his part was impossible. Then came more tidings of Scroope's violent and minatory language, with always the same burthen—that he would leave no stone unturned to show that there had existed a deed which Charles had either secreted or destroyed, and that he would never rest till he had hanged him.

This of course was wild talk. At first it had only enraged him; but with his recent guilty knowledge and suppression, had come fear. His danger was the existence of the deed, and little by little he brought himself to a resolution to destroy it. There were many falterings and recoils before he could bring himself to commit this crime. At length, however, he did it, and got rid of the custody of that which at any time might become the instrument of his disgrace and ruin. There was relief in this, but also the new and terrible sense of actual guilt.

He had got pretty well rid of his supernatural qualms. It was a different kind of trouble that agitated him now.

But this night, he imagined, he was awakened by a violent shaking of his bed. He could see, in the very imperfect light, two figures at the foot of it, holding each a bed-post. One of these he half fancied was his brother, Scroope, but the other was the old Squire—of that he was sure—and he fancied that they had shaken him up from his sleep. Squire Toby was talking as Charlie wakened, and he heard him say:

“Put out of our own house by you! It won't hold for long. We'll

come in together, friendly, and stay. Forwarned, wi' yer eyes open, ye did it; and now Scroope 'll hang you! We'll hang you together! Look at me, you devil's limb."

And the old Squire tremblingly stretched his face, torn with shot, and bloody, and growing every moment more and more into the likeness of the dog, and began to stretch himself out and climb the bed over the foot-board; and he saw the figure at the other side, little more than a black shadow, begin also to scale the bed; and there was instantly a dreadful confusion and uproar in the room, and such a gabbling and laughing; he could not catch the words; but, with a scream, he woke, and found himself standing on the floor. The phantoms and the clamour were gone, but a crush and ringing of fragments was in his ears. The great china bowl, from which for generations the Marstons of Gylingden had been baptized, had fallen from the mantelpiece, and was smashed on the hearth-stone.

"I've bin dreamin' all night about Mr. Scroope, and I wouldn't wonder, old Cooper, if he was dead," said the Squire, when he came down in the morning.

"God forbid! I was adreamed about him, too, sir: I dreamed he was dammin' and sinkin' about a hole was burnt in his coat, and the old master, God be wi' him! said—quite plain—I'd 'a swore 'twas himself—'Cooper, get up, ye d——d land-loupin' thief, and lend a hand to hang him—for he's a daft cur, and no dog o' mine.' 'Twas the dog shot over night, I do suppose, as was runnin' in my old head. I thought old master gied me a punch wi' his knuckles, and says I, wakenin' up, 'At yer service, sir;' and for a while I couldn't get it out o' my head, master was in the room still."

Letters from town soon convinced the Squire that his brother Scroope, so far from being dead was particularly active; and Charlie's attorney wrote to say, in serious alarm, that he had heard, accidentally, that he intended setting up a case, of a supplementary deed of settlement, of which he had secondary evidence, which would give him Gylingden. And at this menace Handsome Charlie snapped his fingers, and wrote courageously to his attorney; abiding what might follow with, however, a secret foreboding.

Scroope threatened loudly now, and swore after his bitter fashion, and reiterated his old promise of hanging that cheat at last. In the midst of these menaces and preparations, however, a sudden peace proclaimed itself: Scroope died, without time even to make provision for a posthumous attack upon his brother. It was one of those cases of disease of the heart in which death is as sudden as by a bullet.

Charlie's exultation was undisguised. It was shocking. Not, of course, altogether malignant. For there was the expansion consequent on the removal of a secret fear. There was also the comic piece of luck, that only the day before Scroope had destroyed his old

will, which left to a stranger every farthing he possessed, intending in a day or two to execute another to the same person, charged with the express condition of prosecuting the suit against Charlie.

The result was, that all his possessions went unconditionally to his brother Charles as his heir. Here were grounds for abundance of savage elation. But there was also the deep-seated hatred of half a life of mutual and persistent aggression and revilings; and Handsome Charlie was capable of nursing a grudge, and enjoying a revenge with his whole heart.

He would gladly have prevented his brother's being buried in the old Gylingden chapel, where he wished to lie; but his lawyers doubted his power, and he was not quite proof against the scandal which would attend his turning back the funeral, which would, he knew, be attended by some of the county gentry and others, with an hereditary regard for the Marstons.

But he warned his servants that not one of them were to attend it; promising, with oaths and curses not to be disregarded, that any one of them who did so, should find his door shut in his face on his return.

I don't think, with the exception of old Cooper, that the servants cared for this prohibition, except as it baulked a curiosity always strong in the solitude of the country. Cooper was very much vexed that the eldest son of the old Squire should be buried in the old family chapel, and no sign of decent respect from Gylingden Hall. He asked his master, whether he would not, at least, have some wine and refreshments in the oak parlour, in case any of the country gentlemen who paid this respect to the old family should come up to the house? But the Squire only swore at him, told him to mind his own business, and ordered him to say, if such a thing happened, that he was out, and no preparations made, and, in fact, to send them away as they came. Cooper expostulated stoutly, and the Squire grew angrier; and after a tempestuous scene, took his hat and stick and walked out, just as the funeral descending the valley from the direction of the "Old Angel Inn" came in sight.

Old Cooper prowled about disconsolately, and counted the carriages as well as he could from the gate. When the funeral was over, and they began to drive away, he returned to the hall, the door of which lay open, and as usual deserted. Before he reached it quite a mourning coach drove up, and two gentlemen in black cloaks, and with crapes to their hats, got out, and without looking to the right or the left, went up the steps into the house. Cooper followed them slowly. The carriage had, he supposed, gone round to the yard, for, when he reached the door, it was no longer there.

So he followed the two mourners into the house. In the hall he found a fellow-servant, who said he had seen two gentlemen, in black

cloaks, pass through the hall, and go up the stairs without removing their hats, or asking leave of any one. This was very odd, old Cooper thought, and a great liberty; so upstairs he went to make them out.

But he could not find them then, nor ever. And from that hour the house was troubled.

In a little time there was not one of the servants who had not something to tell. Steps and voices followed them sometimes in the passages, and tittering whispers, always minatory, scared them at corners of the galleries, or from dark recesses; so that they would return panic-stricken to be rebuked by thin Mrs. Beckett, who looked on such stories as worse than idle. But Mrs. Beckett herself, a short time after, took a very different view of the matter.

She had herself begun to hear these voices, and with this formidable aggravation, that they came always when she was at her prayers, which she had been punctual in saying all her life, and utterly interrupted them. She was scared at such moments by dropping words and sentences, which grew, as she persisted, into threats and blasphemies.

These voices were not always in the room. They called, as she fancied, through the walls, very thick in that old house, from the neighbouring apartments, sometimes on one side, sometimes on the other; sometimes they seemed to hollo from distant lobbies, and came muffled, but threateningly, through the long panelled passages. As they approached they grew furious, as if several voices were speaking together. Whenever, as I said, this worthy woman applied herself to her devotions, these horrible sentences came hurrying toward the door, and, in panic, she would start from her knees, and all then would subside except the thumping of her heart against her stays, and the dreadful tremours of her nerves.

What these voices said, Mrs. Beckett never could quite remember one minute after they had ceased speaking; one sentence chased another away; gibe and menace and impious denunciation, each hideously articulate, were lost as soon as heard. And this added to the effect of these terrifying mockeries and invectives, that she could not, by any effort, retain their exact import, although their horrible character remained vividly present to her mind.

For a long time the Squire seemed to be the only person in the house absolutely unconscious of these annoyances. Mrs. Beckett had twice made up her mind within the week to leave. A prudent woman, however, who has been comfortable for more than twenty years in a place, thinks oftener than twice before she leaves it. She and old Cooper were the only servants in the house who remembered the good old housekeeping in Squire Toby's day. The others were few, and such as could hardly be accounted regular servants. Meg Dobbs, who acted as housemaid, would not sleep in the house, but walked

home, in trepidation, to her father's, at the gate-house, under the escort of her little brother, every night. Old Mrs. Beckett, who was high and mighty with the make-shift servants of fallen Gylingden, let herself down all at once, and made Mrs. Kymes and the kitchen-maid move their beds into her large and faded room, and there, very frankly, shared her nightly terrors with them.

Old Cooper was testy and captious about these stories. He was already uncomfortable enough by reason of the entrance of the two muffled figures into the house, about which there could be no mistake. His own eyes had seen them. He refused to credit the stories of the women, and affected to think that the two mourners might have left the house and driven away, on finding no one to receive them.

Old Cooper was summoned at night to the oak parlour, where the Squire was smoking.

"I say, Cooper," said the Squire, looking pale and angry, "what for ha' you been frightenin' they crazy women wi' your plaguy stories? d— me, if you see ghosts here it's no place for you, and it's time you should pack. I won't be left without servants. Here has been old Beckett, wi' the cook and the kitchenmaid, as white as pipe-clay, all in a row, to tell me I must have a parson to sleep among them, and preach down the devil! Upon my soul, you're a wise old body, filling their heads wi' maggots! and Meg goes down to the lodge every night, afeard to lie in the house—all your doing, wi' your old wives' stories,—ye withered old Tom o' Bedlam!"

"I'm not to blame, Master Charles. 'Tisn't along o' no stories o' mine, for I'm never done tellin' 'em it's all vanity and vapours. Mrs. Beckett 'ill tell you that, and there's been many a wry word betwixt us on the head o't. Whate'er I may *think*," said old Cooper, significantly, and looking askance, with the sternness of fear in the Squire's face.

The Squire averted his eyes, and muttered angrily to himself, and turned away to knock the ashes out of his pipe on the hob, and then turning suddenly round upon Cooper again, he spoke, with a pale face, but not quite so angrily as before.

"I know you're no fool, old Cooper, when you like. Suppose there was such a thing as a ghost here, don't you see, it ain't to them snipe-headed women it 'id go to tell its story. What ails you, man, that ye should think aught about it, but just what *I* think? You had a good headpiece o' yer own once, Cooper, don't be you clappin' a goose-cap over it, as my poor father used to say; d— it, old boy, you mustn't let 'em be fools, settin' one another wild wi' their blether, and makin' the folk talk what they shouldn't, about Gylingden and the family. I don't think ye'd like that, old Cooper, I'm sure ye wouldn't. The women has gone out o' the kitchen, make up a bit o' fire, and get your

pipe. I'll go to you, when I finish this one, and we'll smoke a bit together, and a glass o' brandy and water."

Down went the old butler, not altogether unused to such condescensions in that disorderly, and lonely household; and let not those who can choose their company, be too hard on the Squire who couldn't.

When he had got things tidy, as he said, he sat down in that big old kitchen, with his feet on the fender, the kitchen candle burning in a great brass candlestick, which stood on the deal table at his elbow, with the brandy bottle and tumblers beside it, and Cooper's pipe also in readiness. And these preparations completed, the old butler, who had remembered other generations and better times, fell into rumination, and so, gradually, into a deep sleep.

Old Cooper was half awakened by some one laughing low, near his head. He was dreaming of old times in the Hall, and fancied one of "the young gentlemen" going to play him a trick, and he mumbled something in his sleep, from which he was awakened by a stern deep voice, saying, "You wern't at the funeral; I might take your life, I'll take your ear." At the same moment, the side of his head received a violent push, and he started to his feet. The fire had gone down, and he was chilled. The candle was expiring in the socket, and threw on the white wall long shadows, that danced up and down from the ceiling to the ground, and their black outlines he fancied resembled the two men in cloaks, whom he remembered with a profound horror.

He took the candle, with all the haste he could, getting along the passage, on whose walls the same dance of black shadows was continued, very anxious to reach his room before the light should go out. He was startled half out of his wits by the sudden clang of his master's bell, close over his head, ringing furiously.

"Ha, ha! There it goes—yes, sure enough," said Cooper, reassuring himself with the sound of his own voice, as he hastened on, hearing more and more distant every moment the same furious ringing. "He's fell asleep, like me; that's it, and his lights is out, I lay you fifty——"

When he turned the handle of the door of the oak parlour, the Squire wildly called, "Who's *there*?" in the tone of a man who expects a robber.

"It's me, old Cooper, all right, Master Charlie, you didn't come to the kitchen after all, sir."

"I'm very bad, Cooper; I don't know how I've been. Did you meet anything?" asked the Squire.

"No," said Cooper.

They stared on one another.

"Come here—stay here! Don't you leave me! Look round the

room, and say is all right; and gie us your hand, old Cooper, for I must hold it." The Squire's was damp and cold, and trembled very much. It was not very far from day-break now."

After a time he spoke again: "I 'a done many a thing I shouldn't. I'm not fit to go, and wi' God's blessin' I'll look to it—why shouldn't I? I'm as lame as old Billy—I'll never be able to do any good no more, and I'll give over drinking, and marry, as I ought to 'a done long ago—none o' yer fine ladies, but a good homely wench; there's Farmer Crump's youngest daughter, a good lass, and discreet. What for shouldn't I take her? She'd take care o' me, and wouldn't bring a head full o' romances here, and mantua-makers' trumpery, and I'll talk wi' the parson, and I'll do what's fair wi' everyone; and mind, I said I'm sorry, for many a thing I 'a done."

A wild cold dawn had by this time broken. The Squire, Cooper said, looked "awful bad," as he got his hat and stick, and sallied out for a walk, instead of going to his bed, as Cooper besought him, looking so wild and distracted, that it was plain his object was simply to escape from the house. It was twelve o'clock when the Squire walked into the kitchen, where he was sure of finding some of the servants, looking as if ten years had passed over him since yesterday. He pulled a stool by the fire, without speaking a word, and sat down. Cooper had sent to Applebury for the doctor, who had just arrived, but the Squire would not go to him. "If he wants to see me, he may come here," he muttered as often as Cooper urged him. So the doctor did come, charily enough, and found the Squire very much worse than he had expected.

The Squire resisted the order to get to his bed. But the doctor insisted under a threat of death, at which his patient quailed.

"Well, I'll do what you say—only this—you must let old Cooper and Dick Keeper stay wi' me. I mustn't be left alone, and they must keep awake o' nights; and stay a while, do *you*. When I get round a bit, I'll go and live in a town. It's dull livin' here, now that I can't do nou't, as I used, and I'll live a better life, mind ye; ye heard me say that, and I don't care who laughs, and I'll talk wi' the parson. I like 'em to laugh, hang 'em, it's a sign I'm doin' right, at last."

The doctor sent a couple of nurses from the County Hospital, not choosing to trust his patient to the management he had selected, and he went down himself to Gylingden to meet them in the evening. Old Cooper was ordered to occupy the dressing-room, and sit up at night, which satisfied the Squire, who was in a strangely excited state, very low, and threatened, the doctor said, with fever.

The clergyman came, an old, gentle, "book-learned" man, and talked and prayed with him late that evening. After he had gone the Squire called the nurses to his bed-side, and said:

"There's a fellow sometimes comes: you'll never mind him. He

looks in at the door and beckons,—a thin, hump-backed chap in mourning, wi' black gloves on; ye'll know him by his lean face, as brown as the wainscot: don't ye mind his smilin'. You don't go out to him, nor ask him in; he won't say nout; and if he grows anger'd and looks awry at ye, don't ye be afeared, for he can't hurt ye, and he'll grow tired waitin', and go away; and for God's sake mind ye don't ask him in, nor go out after him!"

The nurses put their heads together when this was over, and held afterwards a whispering conference with old Cooper. "Law bless ye!—no, there's no madman in the house," he protested; "not a soul but what ye saw,—its just a trifle o' the fever in his head—no more."

The Squire grew worse as the night wore on. He was heavy and delirious, talking of all sorts of things—of wine, and dogs, and lawyers; and then he began to talk, as it were, to his brother Scroope. As he did so, Mrs. Oliver, the nurse, who was sitting up alone with him, heard, as she thought, a hand softly laid on the door-handle outside, and a stealthy attempt to turn it. "Lord bless us! who's there?" she cried, and her heart jumped into her mouth, as she thought of the hump-backed man in black, who was to put in his head smiling and beckoning.—"Mr. Cooper! sir! are you there?" she cried. "Come here, Mr. Cooper, please—do, sir, quick!"

Old Cooper, called up from his doze by the fire, stumbled in from the dressing-room, and Mrs. Oliver seized him tightly as he emerged.

"The man with the hump has been atryin' the door, Mr. Cooper, as sure as I am here." The Squire was moaning and mumbling in his fever, understanding nothing, as she spoke.—"No, no! Mrs. Oliver, ma'am, it's impossible, for there's no sich man in the house: what is Master Charlie sayin'?"

"He's saying *Scroope* every minute, whatever he means by that, and—and—hisht!—listen!—there's the handle again," and, with a loud scream, she added—"Look at his head and neck in at the door!" and in her tremour she strained old Cooper in an agonizing embrace.

The candle was flaring, and there was a wavering shadow at the door that looked like the head of a man with a long neck, and a longish sharp nose, peeping in and drawing back.

"Don't be a d— fool, ma'am!" cried Cooper, very white, and shaking her with all his might. "It's only the candle, I tell you—nothing in life but that. Don't you see?" and he raised the light; "and I'm sure there was no one at the door, and I'll try, if you let me go."

The other nurse was asleep on a sofa, and Mrs. Oliver called her up in a panic, for company, as old Cooper opened the door. There was no one near it, but at the angle of the gallery was a shadow resembling that which he had seen in the room. He raised the candle a little, and it seemed to beckon with a long hand as the head drew back. "Shadow from the candle!" exclaimed Cooper, aloud, resolved not to

yield to Mrs. Oliver's panic; and, candle in hand, he walked to the corner. There was nothing. He could not forbear peeping down the long gallery from this point, and as he moved the light, he saw precisely the same sort of shadow, a little further down, and as he advanced the same withdrawal, and beckon. "Gammon!" said he; "it is nout but the candle." And on he went, growing half angry and half frightened at the persistency with which this ugly shadow—a literal shadow he was sure it was—presented itself. As he drew near the point where it now appeared, it seemed to collect itself, and nearly dissolve in the central panel of an old carved cabinet which he was now approaching.

In the centre panel of this is a sort of boss carved into a wolf's head. The light fell oddly upon this, and the fugitive shadow seemed to be breaking up, and re-arranging itself as oddly. The eye-ball gleamed with a point of reflected light, which glittered also upon the grinning mouth, and he saw the long, sharp nose of Scroope Marston, and his fierce eye looking at him, he thought, with a steadfast meaning.

Old Cooper stood gazing upon this sight, unable to move, till he saw the face and the figure that belonged to it begin gradually to emerge from the wood. At the same time he heard voices approaching rapidly up a side gallery, and Cooper, with a loud "Lord a-mercy on us!" turned and ran back again, pursued by a sound that seemed to shake the old house like a mighty gust of wind.

Into his master's room burst old Cooper, half wild with fear, and clapped the door and turned the key in a twinkling, looking as if he had been pursued by murderers.

"Did you hear it?" whispered Cooper, now standing near the dressing-room door. They all listened, but not a sound from without disturbed the utter stillness of night. "God bless us! I doubt it's my old head that's gone crazy!" exclaimed Cooper.

He would tell them nothing but that he was himself "an old fool," to be frightened by their talk, and that "the rattle of a window, or the dropping o' a pin" was enough to scare him now; and so he helped himself through that night with brandy, and sat up talking by his master's fire.

The Squire recovered slowly from his brain fever, but not perfectly. A very little thing, the doctor said, would suffice to upset him. He was not yet sufficiently strong to remove for change of scene and air, which were necessary for his complete restoration.

Cooper slept in the dressing-room, and was now his only nightly attendant. The ways of the invalid were odd: he liked, half sitting up in his bed, to smoke his churchwarden o' nights, and made old Cooper smoke, for company, at the fire-side. As the Squire and his humble friend indulged in it, smoking is a taciturn pleasure, and it was not until the Master of Gylingden had finished his third pipe that

he essayed conversation, and when he did, the subject was not such as Cooper would have chosen.

"I say, old Cooper, look in my face, and don't be afeared to speak out," said the Squire, looking at him with a steady, cunning smile; "you know all this time, as well as I do, who's in the house. You needn't deny—hey?—Scroope and my father?"

"Don't you be talking like that, Charlie," said old Cooper, rather sternly and frightened, after a long silence; still looking in his face, which did not change.

"What's the good o' shammin,' Cooper? Scroope's took the hearin' o' yer right ear—you know he did. He's looking angry. He's nigh took my life wi' this fever. But he's not done wi' me yet, and he looks awful wicked. Ye saw him—ye know ye did."

Cooper was awfully frightened, and the odd smile on the Squire's lips frightened him still more. He dropped his pipe, and stood gazing in silence at his master, and feeling as if he were in a dream.

"If ye think so, ye should not be smiling like that," said Cooper, grimly.

"I'm tired, Cooper, and it's as well to smile as t'other thing; so I'll even smile while I can. You know what they mean to do wi' me. That's all I wanted to say. Now, lad, go on wi' yer pipe—I'm goin' asleep."

So the Squire turned over in his bed, and lay down serenely, with his head on the pillow. Old Cooper looked at him, and glanced at the door, and then half-filled his tumbler with brandy, and drank it off, and felt better, and got to his bed in the dressing-room.

In the dead of night he was suddenly awakened by the Squire, who was standing, in his dressing-gown and slippers, by his bed.

"I've brought you a bit o' a present. I got the rents o' Hazelden yesterday, and ye'll keep that for yourself—it's a fifty—and give t' other to Nelly Carwell, to-morrow; I'll sleep the sounder; and I saw Scroope since; he's not such a bad 'un after all, old fellow! He's got a crape over his face—for I told him I couldn't bear it; and I'd do many a thing for him now. I never could stand shilly-shally. Good-night, old Cooper!"

And the Squire laid his trembling hand kindly on the old man's shoulder, and returned to his own room. "I don't half like how he is. Doctor don't come half often enough. I don't like that queer smile o' his, and his hand was as cold as death. I hope in God his brain's not a-turnin'!"

With these reflections, he turned to the pleasanter subject of his present, and at last fell asleep.

In the morning, when he went into the Squire's room, the Squire had left his bed. "Never mind; he'll come back, like a bad shillin'," thought old Cooper, preparing the room as usual. But he did not

return. Then began an uneasiness, succeeded by a panic, when it began to be plain that the Squire was not in the house. What had become of him? None of his clothes, but his dressing-gown and slippers, were missing. Had he left the house, in his present sickly state, in that garb? and, if so, could he be in his right senses; and was there a chance of his surviving a cold, damp night, so passed, in the open air?

Tom Edwards was up to the house, and told them, that, walking a mile or so that morning, at four o'clock—there being no moon—along with Farmer Nokes, who was driving his cart to market, in the dark, three men walked, in front of the horse, not twenty yards before them, all the way from near Gylingden Lodge to the burial-ground, the gate of which was opened for them from within, and the three men entered, and the gate was shut. Tom Edwards thought they were gone in to make preparation for a funeral of some member of the Marston family. But the occurrence seemed to Cooper, who knew there was no such thing, horribly ominous.

He now commenced a careful search, and at last bethought him of the lonely upper story, and 'King Herod's chamber. He saw nothing changed there, but the closet door was shut, and, dark as was the morning, something, like a large white knot sticking out over the door, caught his eye.

The door resisted his efforts to open it for a time; some great weight forced it down against the floor; at length, however, it did yield a little, and a heavy crash, shaking the whole floor, and sending an echo flying through all the silent corridors, with a sound like receding laughter, half stunned him.

When he pushed open the door, his master was lying dead upon the floor. His cravat was drawn halter-wise tight round his throat, and had done its work well. The body was cold, and had been long dead.

In due course the coroner held his inquest, and the jury pronounced, "that the deceased, Charles Marston, had died by his own hand, in a state of temporary insanity." But old Cooper had his own opinion about the Squire's death, though his lips were sealed, and he never spoke about it. He went and lived for the residue of his days in York, where there are still people who remember him, a taciturn and surly old man, who attended church regularly, and also drank a little, and was known to have saved some money.
